THE

HINDOOS AS THEY ARE.

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HINDOOS AS THEY ARE:

A DESCRIPTION OF

THE MANNERS, CUSTOMS, AND INNER LIFE OF HINDOO SOCIETY IN BENGAL.

BY

SHIB CHUNDER BOSE.

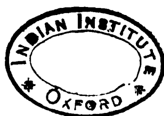
SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

Calcutta:

THACKER, SPINK AND CO.

LONDON: W. THACKER & Co.

1883.



CALCUTTA:
PRINTED BY THACKER, SPINK AND CO.

PREFATORY NOTE.

Babu Shib Chunder Bose is an enlightened Bengali, of matured conviction and character, who, having received the stirring impulse of Western culture and thought during the early period of Dr. Duff's work in the General Assembly's Institution, has continued faithful to it through all these long and changeful years. His extended and varied experience, his careful habit of observation and contrast, his large store of general reading and information, and his rare sobriety and earnestness of judgment, eminently qualify him for lifting the veil from the inner domestic life of his countrymen, and giving such an account of their social and religious observances as may prove intelligible and instructive to general English readers. In the sketches which he has now produced we are presented with the first-fruits of "the harvest of a quiet eye" that has long meditatively watched the strange ongoings of this ancient society, and penetrated with living insight into the springs and tendencies of its startling changes.

Although I had no special claim to any right of judgment upon the present phases of Hindoo life, the writer took me early into his confidence, and from the apparent quality and sincerity of his work I had no hesitation in encouraging him to persevere, recommending him, however, to leave historical speculation to others and to confine himself to a faithful delineation of facts within his own experience. While his manuscripts were passing through my hands, I took pains to verify his descriptions by frequent reference to younger educated natives, who, in all cases, confirmed the accuracy and reliability of the details. The book will stand on its own merits with English readers, whose happily increasing interest in the forms

and movements of Hindoo life at this transitional period, when the picturesque institutions and habits of thousands of years are visibly and irrevocably passing away, should gladly welcome its fresh and opportune representations. And all who, viewing without regret the decay of the old order and animated by the faith of nobler possibilities than it has ever achieved, are actually engaged in the great work of religious regeneration and social reform in India, should find much in these truthful but saddening sketches to intensify their sympathies and give definite direction and guidance to their best efforts.

W. HASTIE.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S INSTITUTION,
23*rd March*, 1881.

SECOND EDITION.

My worthy friend, whose high character and sound judgment always impress me more deeply, insists on retaining my introductory word of recommendation in his Second Edition, although his excellent work now stands secure on its own universally recognized merits. I heartily congratulate him on his well-deserved success, and especially on the practical sympathy which he has so largely awakened in earnest circles. The very favourable recognition which he has received from the most competent judges and critics is not more generous than just, and it stamps his production as of solid and enduring value. His Second Edition appears most opportunely when Englishmen, interested more than ever in India, are eagerly seeking the means of estimating aright the intellectual and moral characteristics of his countrymen, and amid the many extreme, interested, and passionate outcries of the partisans of the hour, they will find no source of information to which they may more safely turn for guidance than these candid, conscientions, and careful sketches.

5th November, 1883. W. H.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THAT a second edition of my work—"The Hindoos as they are"—has been called for within so short a time as two years, has afforded me, I need hardly say, the greatest possible encouragement. In presenting this edition to the generous public, I beg to say that it has undergone a thorough revision, and a chapter has been added on "Married life in Bengal." For the convenience of foreign readers, it has been thought necessary to append a glossary of the vernacular terms interspersed in the text, which I hope will be found useful for the purpose intended.

In conclusion, I have to offer my most grateful thanks for the very liberal support extended to it by

The Rt. Hon. the Secy. of State for India in Council.
H. E. the Viceroy and Governor-General of India.
H. E. the Governor of Bombay.
H. E. the Governor of Madras.
H. H. the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.
H. H. the Lieutenant-Governor of N. W. Provinces.
H. H. the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab.
The Hon. Sir Steuart Bayley, K.C.S.I.
The Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces.
The Chief Commissioner of Assam.
The Chief Commissioner of British Burmah.
H. H. the Nizam's Government.
H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda.
H. H. the Maharajah of Mysore.
H. H. the Maharajah of Burdwan.

H. H. the Maharajah of Travancore.
H. H. the Maharajah of Vizianagram.
And several other distinguished Native Chiefs, &c.

In London and Edinburgh, the cordial reception the work has met with, and the very favorable opinions passed on it by the Press—brief extracts from which will be found at the end of the volume—have far exceeded my most sanguine expectations. Such encouragement, I need hardly add, furnishes a strong stimulus to the further prosecution of my humble literary labors, undertaken under a deep sense of the responsibility attached to a trustworthy description of the present manners and customs of my countrymen, and with a hope of facilitating, if possible, the work of philanthropists to ameliorate their social condition and raise them in the scale of civilization.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

In presenting the following volume to the Public, I am conscious of the very great disadvantage I labor under in attempting to communicate my thoughts through the medium of a language differing from my mother-tongue both in the forms of construction and in the methods of expression. My appeal to the indulgence of the public is based on the ground of my work being true to its name. It professes to be a simple, but faithful, delineation of the present state of Hindoo society in Bengal, and especially in Calcutta, the Athens of Hindoosthan. I cannot promise any thing thrilling or sensational. My principal object is to give as much information as possible regarding the moral, intellectual, social, and domestic economy of my countrymen and countrywomen. The interest attaching to the information and facts furnished will greatly depend on the spirit in which they may be received. To such of my readers as feel a genuine interest in a true picture of the present state of society in this country, passing from almost impenetrable darkness into marvellous light, through the general and rapid diffusion of western knowledge, I do not think the details I have given will appear dull or dry. Not a few of the facts stated will, I fear, prove painfully interesting to those who were not cognizant of the many

ingrained evils still lurking in our social system. But if we look carefully, we shall doubtless discover that all is not darkness and clouds, "it has its crimson dawns, its rosy sunsets." The multitudinous phases of Hindoo life, though sadly repulsive in many respects, have nevertheless some redeeming features, revealing radiant glimpses of simple and innocent joys. In discussing the various social questions in their purely secular aspects and relationships, it may be I have treated some of them inadequately and superficially, but in so doing, I claim the merit of a humble endeavour after perfect honesty. I have in no wise exaggerated, but have simply followed the golden maxim—"nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice."

The men of the land, and not the land of the men, form the subject-matter of my work. My attention has long been directed to the domestic, social, moral, intellectual, and religious condition of the Hindoos. The deep researches of European savants have, from time to time, thrown a flood of light on the learning and antiquities of India. We have every reason to admire the great truthfulness and accuracy of many of their observations. As foreigners, however, they were naturally constrained to pay but a subordinate attention to the peculiar domestic and social economy of the Natives. The idea of attempting a sketch of the inner life and habits of the Hindoos in this age, was originally suggested to the writer by the Revd. Drs. Duff and Charles—two Christian philanthropists, whose names are gratefully enshrined in the memory of the Hindoos of Bengal, the field of their educational and religious achievements. It was cordially approved by that high-minded statesman, Sir Charles Theophilus,

afterwards Lord Metcalfe, who practically taught the Indian Public, what a writer in the "*Nineteenth Century*" so aptly calls the great Trinity of Liberty,—freedom of speech, freedom of trade, and freedom of religion.

To supply this desideratum, and not merely to gratify natural curiosity to know the inner life of the Hindoos, but to do something in the line of social amelioration by "bringing the stagnant waters of Eastern life into contact with the quickening stream of European progress," has been the chief aim of the following pages. Should a liberal Public, here as well as in Europe and America, vouchsafe its countenance to this my first literary enterprise, I purpose to continue my humble labour in the same sphere, extending my observation to a picture of the social life of Upper, Western, and Southern India. The vastness of the subject is one great difficulty. But it will open to all civilized and philanthrophic nations a wide and yet unexplored field for the exercise of their thoughts and sympathies.

To Europeans, and more especially to Englishmen, who have, for more than a century and a half, been, under Providence, the great and beneficent arbiters of the destiny of this vast empire, a correct knowledge of the domestic and social institutions of the Hindoos is of vital importanee, being absolutely indispensable to right understanding of the wants, wishes, feelings and sentiments, condition and progress of the subject race. Many erroneous ideas concerning the singular customs of the people of India still prevail in Europe and America. They are partly due to defective observation, and partly to the prejudices of men whose minds are too pre-occupied to properly understand and appreciate the peculiar

phases of character, manners, and usages of any other nation than their own. Such men are unfortunately led to associate the Natives "with ways that are dark and tricks that are vain." To remove the mass of misconception yet prevailing in some quarters by placing before the general reader a true and comprehensive knowledge of the daily life of a people, who occupy such a large part of the earth's surface, and whose numbers are counted by hundreds of millions, is indeed an important step towards the solution of a great social problem, and towards the removal of the gulf that divides the sons of the soil from the English rulers of the country. The tendency of close and constant intercourse is to promote an identity of interests between the two races. As a Native, the author may be allowed to have had the facilities requisite for acquiring a clear idea of the manners and customs of his countrymen, which may counterbalance in some degree the difficulties naturally experienced by him on the score of language.

The Rev. W. Hastie, B. D., Principal of the General Assembly's Institution, and Mr. J. B. Knight, C.I.E., have laid me under great and lasting obligations by their kind suggestions and encouragement. I have particularly to thank the former for the prefatory note which he has written in response to my special request.

SHIB CHUNDER BOSE.

I.

THE HINDOO HOUSEHOLD.

IT is my intention in the following pages to endeavour to convey to the mind of the European reader some distinct idea of the present manners and customs, usages and institutions of my Hindoo countrymen, illustrative of their peculiar domestic and social habits and the *inner* life of our society, the details of which can never be sufficiently accessible to Europeans. "It is in the domestic circle that manners are best seen, where restraint is thrown aside, and no external authority controls the freedom of expression."

I shall begin with a general account of the normal Hindoo household, as the living centre of the various elements of our society. But as it is impossible to describe all the varieties of social condition in a single sketch, I shall describe only the domestic arrangements of a family of one of the higher castes, enjoying a convenient share of worldly prosperity. Only the principal elements in the group can now be alluded to; some of them will be described with greater detail in separate sketches.

The family domicile of a Hindoo is, to all intents and purposes, a regular sanctum, not easily accessible to the outside world. Its peculiar construction, its tortuous passages, its small compartments and special apportionment, obviously indicate the prevalence of a taste "cabined, cribbed, confined," precluding, as they do, free ventilation and free intercourse. The annals of history have long since established the fact that

the close confinement system, which exists in Bengal, was mainly owing to the oppressions of the Moslem conquerors, and more recently to the inroads of the Pindaree marauders, commonly termed *Bargis*, the tales of whose depredations are still listened to with gaping mouth and terrified interest.

The gradual consolidation of the British power having established on a firm basis the security of life and property, the people are beginning to avail themselves of an improved mode of habitation, affording better accommodation and a wider range of the comforts and conveniences of life. From time out of mind there has existed in the country a sort of domestic and social economy, bearing a close resemblance to the old patriarchal system, recognising the principle of a common father or head of a family, who exercises parental control over all. The system of a joint Hindoo family* partaking of the same food, living under the same roof from generation to generation, breathing the same atmosphere, and worshipping the same god, is decidedly a traditional inheritance which the peculiar structure of Hindoo society has long reared and fostered. This side of the subject will be enlarged upon in its proper place.

A few words about the respective position and duties of the principal members of a Hindoo household will here be in order. I shall, therefore, begin with the *Kartá*, or male head, who, as the term imports, exercises supreme control over the whole family, so that no domestic affair of any importance

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* The late Dr. Jackson, who was the family physician of the great Native millionaire — Babu Ashutash Dey — seeing the very large number of men and women who resided in his family dwelling-house, remarked that the mansion was a small colony. A similar remark was made by Dr. Duff when he happened to see the numerous members of the Datta family in Nimtalá, west of the Free Church Institution. If all the children and adults, male and female, of the family, were now counted, the actual number would, if I am not mistaken, come up to near 500 persons, perhaps more.

may be undertaken without his consent or knowledge. The financial expenditure, almost entirely regulated by his superior judgment, seldom or never exceeds the available means at his disposal. The honor, dignity, and reputation of the family wholly depend on his prudence and wisdom, weighted by age and matured by experience. His own individual happiness is identified with that of the other members of the household. There is a proverb among the Natives, teaching that the counsel of the aged should be accepted for all the practical purposes of life (except in a few unhappy instances to be noticed hereafter); and the rule exerts a healthy influence on the domestic circle. As the supreme head, he has not only to look after the secular wants of the family but likewise to watch the spiritual needs of all the members, checking irregularities by the sound discipline of earnest admonition. As one of the usual consequences of a patriarchal system, a respectable Hindoo is often obliged to support a number of hangers-on, more or less related to him by kinship. A brother, an uncle, a nephew, a brother-in-law, etc., with their families, are not unfrequently placed in this dependent position, notwithstanding the trite apothegm,—which says, "it is better to be dependent on another for *food* than to live in his *house.*" This saying is to be supplemented by another, which runs thus: "*Lakshmí*, the goddess of prosperity, always commands a numerous train." The proper significance of these phrases is but too well understood by those who have been unfortunate enough to come under their practical exemplification.

Next in point of importance in the domestic circle is his wife, the *Ginní*, or the female head, whose position is a responsible one, and whose duties are alike manifold and arduous. She has to look after the victualling department, report to her husband or sons the exact state of the stores,* order what is

* Natives are always provident enough to lay in a month's supply of those articles which are not of a perishable nature. In the Upper

wanted, account for the extra consumption of victuals, adopt the necessary precautions against being robbed, see that every one is duly fed, and that hospitality is extended to the poor and helpless, watch that the rules of purity are practically observed in every department of the household, and make daily arrangements as to the meals for the day. The practice of domestic economy engages her whole attention from the moment she undertakes her varied duties in the inner department of a household, the proper management of which is to her a congenial occupation, becoming her sex, her position, her habitudes, her tastes. Independent of these domestic duties, which are enough to absorb her mind, she has other duties to discharge, which shall be indicated hereafter.

The other members in the body of the household are the daughters and daughters-in-law, whose relative positions and duties demand a separate notice. Looking at their close relationship it is reasonable to conclude that they should bear the kindliest feelings to each other, and evince a tender regard for each other's happiness, returning love for love, and sympathy for sympathy. But unhappily, here, as elsewhere, the opposition of incompatible temperaments embitters some of the sweetest enjoyments of life. In the majority of cases, a *nanad*, the sister of the husband, though allied to another family, is nevertheless solicitous to minister to the domestic felicity of her *bhája*, or the wife of her brother, but unhappily her intent is often misconstrued, and the sincerity of her motive questioned. Instead of an unclouded cordiality subsisting between them, the generous affection of the one is but ill-requited by the other. Hence, an unaccountable coldness commonly springs up between them, which materially subtracts from the growth of domestic felicity.

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and Central Provinces, they generally provide a twelve-months' requirements at the harvest season, when prices are moderate. They are thus enabled to husband their resources in the most economical manner possible.

Shame on us that a vast amount of ignorance and prejudice yet renders us incapable of appreciating the highest end of the social state.

When the female members of a household receive a visit from their neighbours and friends (such visits being few and far between), their first inquiry is generally as to the amount of ornaments possessed, their workmanship, their value. Few things please them better than a conversation on this subject, which, from the absence of mental culture, almost wholly monopolizes their mind. If not thus spent, the time is usually frittered away in sundry petty frivolous enquiries of a purely domestic character. On matters of the most vital importance their notions are absurd and childish.* Except in isolated

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* The following scene will clearly illustrate the point. At an assembly of females on a festive occasion, the conversation turned, among other current topics of the day, on the religion of the *Sáheb loques* (Europeans). Impelled by a sense of justice no less than by the convictions of conscience, I expressed my admiration of the disinterested exertions of the Christian Missionaries in endeavouring to spread among our benighted countrymen the benefits of a good education as well as the blessings of a good religion. Fearlessly encountering all the dangérs of the deep, renouncing all the pleasures of the world, and submitting to persecution, suffering, and reproach, they not only come among us, but travel through the most uncongenial climes, in order "to preach Christ." The remarkable disinterestedness and self-denial of some of these Missionaries is a bright reality, to appreciate which is to appreciate Christianity. Before the propagation of the religion of Christ, said I, the most admired form of goodness was centred in patriotism or the love of one's own country, but Jesus brought with him a new era of philanthropy, the main pervading principle of which is a spirit of martyrdom in the cause of mankind. Can we find traces of such catholicism in our Hindoo Shástra? The universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man is practically enunciated only in the religion of Christ. The women were nearly all struck with the sublime, yet humble and disinterested virtues of the religion of the *Sáheb loques*. But a pert young female, quite unschooled by experience and too much wedded to wordly attractions, rather thoughtlessly replied, "Education is a

instances, their bearing towards each other is marked by suavity and kindliness of manners, which has a tendency to draw closer the bond of union between them all.

It is on such occasions that the amiable loveliness of human nature is displayed,—brightening, for a time at least, the otherwise dark region of a Hindoo zenana, and cheering the hearts of its inmates. In a thickly populated city like Calcutta, with its broad roads densely crowded at all hours of the day, no married female is permitted without a closed conveyance, either a pálkí or a carriage, to leave the house even for a single moment, to go to that of her sister, perhaps some three doors from her own. So great is the privacy and punctiliousness with which female honor is guarded in the East. The sanction of the male or female head must, as a standing rule of female etiquette, be obtained before any one is at liberty to go out even to return a friendly or ceremonious visit. The reader may form an idea as to the tenacity with which the close zenana system is enforced in a respectable family, from the circumstance of a young *Bau*, or daughter-in-law (the rules are not so strict in the case of a daughter) being set down as immodest and unmannerly, if she were accidentally seen to tread the outer or male compartment of the house. If she but chance to articulate a word or a phrase so as to reach the ear of a male outside, she is severely censured, and

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good thing in its own way, so far as it affords a means of earning money; but why do the *Pádris* (Missionaries) strive to convert our Hindoo boys, and thereby compel them to forsake their parents to whom they owe their beings? What advantage do they gain by such conversions? This is not good. The Bráhmo religion does not demand any such sacrifice. Why do the heads of the *Pádris* ache for this purpose? They ought to give all their money to us, poor women, that we may buy ornaments with it." Such is the low, grovelling idea they generally have of Christianity. It is useless to argue with them, simply because their minds are completely saturated with deep-rooted prejudice, and narrow, debased, selfish views.

steps are instantly taken to teach her better manners for the future. Even the *Ginní*, or female head, does not escape censure for a like offence. With such scrupulous pertinacity is the privacy of the *inner* life of Hindoo society preserved. A line of social demarcation is drawn around the zenana which a well-bred Hindoo female is taught never to overstep, either in her conversation or bearing. Woe be to the day when she is incautiously led to move beyond her sphere, which, for all the practical purposes of life, is closely hemmed in by a circle of miserable seclusion, illustrating the scornful lines of the poet:

> "Let Eastern tyrants from the light of heaven seclude their bosom slaves."

A few advanced Hindoos, more especially the Bráhmos, who have received the benefits of an enlightened education, are making strenuous efforts to ameliorate the degraded condition of their wives and sisters (the mothers being too old and conservative to acquiesce in the spirit of modern innovation) and to bring them to the front, if possible, by ignoring the rules of orthodoxy. But it is the firm belief of men of experience and observation, that the time is yet far distant when this bold, sweeping, social revolution will be brought about with the general consensus of the people at large. The moral tone of Native society must be immensely raised, its manners and customs entirely remodelled, and its traditional institutions and prescriptive usages thoroughly purified, before the consummation of so desirable an end can be successfully effected.

A Hindoo girl, even after marriage, enjoys greater liberty and is treated with more indulgence at her father's house than at her father-in-law's. The cause of this is obvious. From the very period of her birth, she is cherished by her mother, aunts, and sisters, no less than by her father, uncles, and brothers,—all of whom naturally continue to bear to her the same love and affection throughout her after-life. A mother

hugs her more tenderly, caresses her more fondly, hangs about her more affectionately, feels greater sympathy in her joy and sorrow, and watches more carefully how she grows up in health than any mother-in-law can do. Whether she is eating, talking or playing, her mother's care never ceases. Should maternal admonition fail to produce the desired effect, as it sometimes does, the usual threat of sending her to her father-in-law's, acts as the most wholesome corrective.

The social relaxations of Hindoo females have a very limited range. Some delight in reading the Mahábhárat, the Rámáyana, tales, romances, etc., while others are fond of needle-work, playing at cards, or listening to stories of a puerile nature. Though they seldom leave their houses, yet their stock of gossip is almost inexhaustible. They are generally lively and loquacious, and the chief passion of their life is for the acquisition of ornaments. They possess a retentive memory, seldom forgetting what they once hear. Fond of hyperboles, the sober realities of life have little attraction for their minds. Their social tone is neither so pure nor so elevated as becomes a polished, refined community. It is almost needless to add that their familiar conversation is not characterised by that chaste, dignified language, which constitutes a prominent characteristic of a people far advanced in civilization. Objectionable modes of expression generally pass muster among them, simply because they labor under the great disadvantage of the national barrenness of intellect and the acknowledged poverty of colloquial literature.

It is a well-known fact that Hindoo males and females do not take their meals together. Both squat down on the floor when eating. Except in the case of little girls, it is held highly unbecoming in a grown-up female to be seen eating by any male member of the family. As a rule, women take their meals after the men have finished theirs. There is a popular belief that women take a longer time to eat than men. Of the perfection of the culinary art, they are better judges than

the men. They chat and eat leisurely, because, when they have finished, they have no offices to go to, nor any definite occupation to engage their minds in. A Hindoo writer has said, that, commonly speaking, they eat more and digest more readily than men. Easily pleased by nature, they take their meals without any complaint, though sometimes their food is not of the very best description. The choicest part of the food is offered in the first instance to the males, and the residue is kept for the females. A woman is religiously forbidden to taste of anything in the shape of eatables before it is given to a man. Simple in taste, diet and habits, but shut up in a state of close confinement, and leading a monotonous life, scarcely cheered by one ray of light, they are necessarily not fitted to receive large communications of truth.

The children form an important link in the great chain of the domestic circle. When sporting about in childhood, they have commonly spare persons, light brown skins, high foreheads beaming with intelligence, large dark eyes, aquiline noses, small thin-lipped mouths, and dark soft hair. The fairness of their complexion is generally darkened by exposure to the sun in the earliest stage of childhood.

The child grows up under the fostering care of its parents amidst all the surroundings of the family domicile. As it advances in years, the mother endeavours, according to her very limited capacity, to instil into its mind the rude elements of knowledge. From early infancy when his mind becomes susceptible of culture and expansion, crude and imperfect religious ideas, largely leavened with superstition, are communicated to him, which subsequently mould his character in an undesirable manner. His early affections and moral principles are almost entirely influenced by the impressions he receives at the maternal fount, and he seldom comes in contact with the outer world. He is taught to pay divine homage to all the idols that are worshipped at stated periods of the year, and his indistinct ideas grow into deep convictions, the perni-

cious influence of which can afterwards be effaced only by the blessings of western knowledge. In the villages *Chánakya sloka*, or rhythmic elementary lessons, are still given as a sort of moral exercise. From want of adequate capacity or culture the mother is unfit to engraft on the youthful mind the higher divine truths, to teach the child how to look on men, how to feel for them, how to bear with them, how to be true, honest, manly, and how to "look beneath the outward to the spiritual, immortal, and divine." Solid, practical wisdom, however, is often extracted from the most commonplace experiences, even by untutored minds.

"Honor thy father and thy mother," is the first scriptural commandment with promise, the importance and excellence of which are early impressed on the mind of a Hindoo child by wise, discreet parents. Hindoos are honorably distinguished by their affections for their parents, and they continue to be so even in the maturer years of their life.

In the case of a girl, even the most elementary sort of instruction is neglected, except that now she occasionally studies the Bengali primer—an innovation which the spirit of the times countenances. When of proper age, she is sent to a female school, where she pursues her studies until finally withdrawn therefrom after her marriage. As a rational being she may continue to evince a natural desire and aptitude for intellectual progress, and may carry it on by home study according to her taste and position in life. A few have made astonishing progress, considering the formidable obstacles which an abnormal state of society inevitably places in their way. The traditional bugbear that she will become a widow if she learns to read and write has happily passed away, not only in the great centres of education but likewise in several parts of the rural districts, where, to all appearances, females are just beginning, as it were, to assert their right to the improvement of their minds. This is certainly an unerring presage, foreshadowing the advent of national regeneration in

the fulness of time. Many families, well-to-do in the world, engage a Christian governess* both for elementary instruction and for needle-work, the latter being an accomplishment for which even the most matronly ladies have now taken a great liking. The introduction of this tasteful art has, in a great measure, superseded the idle, unprofitable gossip of the day, driving away ennui and slothfulness at the same time.

In almost every respectable Hindoo household there is a tutelar god, generally made of stone or metal after one of the images of Krishna, set up on a gold or silver throne, with silver umbrella and silver utensils dedicated to its service. Every morning and evening it is worshipped by the hereditary *Purohit*, or priest, who visits the house for the purpose twice a day, and who, as the name implies, is the *first* in all religious ceremonies, second to none but the *guru*, or spiritual guide. The offerings of rice, fruits, sweetmeats and milk, made to the god, he carries home after the close of the service. A conch is blown, a bell is rung, and a gong beat at the time of worship, when the religiously disposed portion of the inmates,

* The following incident will, doubtless, contribute not a little to the amusement of the reader. One day a governess was giving instructions in needle-work to a young married girl of thirteen years of age. She (the girl) was industriously plying the needle, when lo! an aged female cook from the house of her husband suddenly appeared before her, and simply enquired of her how she was. The shy girl, overpowered by a sense of shame, dropped down her veil almost to the ground, and not only stopped work but likewise ceased to talk to the governess. The latter, struck with amazement, quietly asked her pupil if she had hurt her eyes, because she held fast her right hand on that part of her face. Other ladies of the family stepped forward and explained to the governess the real cause of the awkward position the girl was placed in. It was nothing more nor less than the unexpected visit of the female cook to the family of the bride. From feelings of false delicacy in presence of her husband's cook, she hung down her face and dropped down her veil. The governess learning the true cause politely desired the female cook to retire that she might be enabled to give her lessons without any interruption.

male and female, in a quasi-penitent attitude, make their obeisance to the god and receive in return the hollow benediction of the priest. The daily repetition of the service quickens the heart-beats of the devotees and serves to remind them, however faintly, of their religious duties. Such worship is popularly regarded as an act of great merit, paving the way to everlasting bliss. A suitable endowment in landed property is sometimes set apart for the permanent support of the idol, and is called the *debatra* land, or inalienable property, according to the Hindoo Shástras. Some families that have been reduced to poverty through a reverse of fortune now live on the usufruct of the *debatra* land, which serves as a sheet-anchor in stormy weather.

Besides the daily pujá of the household deity there are some other extraordinary religious celebrations, such as those of Durgá, Kalí, Lakshmí, Jagatdhátrí, Saraswatí, and Kártik, the Janmáshtami, Dole, Rásh and Jhulan Játrás, etc., —the latter four being all pujás of Krishna, which excite the religious fervor of the Vaishnavas, as contra-distinguished from the Sáktas, the followers of Kalí or Durgá, the female principle.

The internal daily details of a Hindoo household next demand our attention. In the morning when the breakfast is ready the little children are served first as they have to go to their schools, and then the adult male members, chiefly brothers, nephews, etc., who have to attend their offices. They all squat down *vis-à-vis* on small bits of carpet on the floor, while the mother sits near them, not to eat but to see that they are all properly served; she closely watches that each of them is duly satisfied; she would never feel happy should any of them find fault with a particular dish as being unsavoury, she snubs the cook and taxes herself for her own want of supervision in the kitchen, because the idea of having failed to do her duty in this respect is an agony to her mind.

As a mother, she avails herself of this opportunity to

engage in conversation, and consult her sons about the conduct of all domestic affairs, which necessarily expand as the family increases. For example, she takes their advice as to the amount of expenditure to be incurred at the forthcoming wedding of *Sharat Shashí*, the youngest daughter, in the month of Falgun, or February. This is an occasion, when the hearts of both the sons and the mother overflow with the milk of human kindness, yet there is a desire to avoid extravagance as far as possible.

A prudent mother wisely regulates her expenses according to the means and earnings of her sons, and she seldom or never comes to grief. An extravagant Hindoo mother has no existence in the actual realities of life. She is a model of economy, devotion, chastity, patience, self-denial, and a martyr to domestic affection. She may be wanting in mental accomplishments, which is not her own fault, but the very large share of strong common-sense she is naturally endowed with sufficiently makes up for every deficiency in the ordinary concerns of life. Accustomed to look upon her sons as the pride of her existence, she seeks every legitimate means to promote their happiness. If her daughters-in-law turn out querulous, and fall out with one another, which is not unfrequently the case, she reconciles them by the panacea of gentle remonstrance. But unhappily, such is the degeneracy of the present age that the influence of wholesome admonition is shamefully ignored and often lost in the deluge of discord; and the inevitable consequence is, that vicious selfishness disturbs Heaven's blessed peace, and "love cools, friendships fall off, brothers divide."

After the sons have gone to their respective offices, the mother changes her clothes and retires into the *thákurghar* (the place of worship) and goes through her morning service, at the close of which she prostrates herself, invokes the blessing of her guardian deity, and then again changing her clothes, takes her breakfast and enjoys a short siesta, while chewing

a mouthful of betle, sometimes mixed with tobacco leaf, in order to strengthen her teeth.

In any sketch of a Hindoo family it is necessary that something should be said about the domestic servants attached to a Hindoo household. The cook, whose employment involves some very important considerations, may be either a male or a female. In most families, a preference is shewn for a female cook* for reasons which are obvious. The kitchen, being, as a rule, placed in the inner division of the house, the females have an opportunity to assist her in various ways, so as to facilitate and expedite her work, which certainly is not always of the most pleasant nature. The dietary of a Hindoo family, as may be easily anticipated, is of the simplest description, consisting for the most part of vegetables and fish, with a little milk and ghee, but no eggs or meat of any kind. Not like the dishes of the French and Mogals, highly flavoured and richly spiced, the daily preparations are very simple ; no onion, garlic, or strong aromatic spices are used. They are easy of digestion and palatable to taste, being altogether free from offensive and fœtid smell. The simple turmeric, pepper, cummin, coriander and mustard seeds, etc., generally impart a fine flavour to the preparations, which the frugal and abstemious Hindoos eat with great zest. I have known the wives of several rich Babus take a delight in preparing with their own hands the evening meal of their husbands and sons. This is entirely a labor of love, which they go through with the greatest cheerfulness. It is necessary to mention here that, without fish, which are very abundant, a nice little Hindoo breakfast or dinner in Bengal is an impossibility. The art of cooking should not be a mystery to all save the initiated few ;

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* Whether descended from a Bráhman or Káyastha family, she goes by the general name of *Bámun Didí* (Bráhman sister), so named that the members of other families might unsuspectingly eat out of her hands. The food cooked by a middle aged female (generally a widow) is considered safe and irreproachable.

it should be the study of every good and thrifty woman who is willing to sacrifice needless elegance and pomp to comfort and economy.

This gastronomical digression will serve to indicate the taste of the Hindoos in Bengal, and the very simple style of their living. Even in the selection of articles of food a nice distinction is observed; fish are dressed in a part of the kitchen quite distinct from where the vegetable dishes are prepared, because a widow is strictly forbidden to use anything which has come in contact with fish. Moreover, a widow will not accept a dish unless it is prepared by a real Bráhman cook, male or female. Should a male member of the family be ever disposed to eat goat flesh (he is forbidden to use any other kind of meat, save mutton, when sacrificed) a *Sákta* cook undertakes to prepare it for him. When she has finished, she changes her clothes and purifies her body by sprinkling over it a few drops of Ganges water. Excepting little unmarried girls, whose parents are *Sáktas* (worshippers of female deities), no Hindoo female is permitted to use meat even by sufferance. In other rigidly orthodox families a similar concession is withheld.

The wages of a female cook, who in nine cases out of ten is a widow, are about six or seven rupees a month, with a few annas extra for *Ekádashí*—the day of close fast for all widows—and cocoanut oil for her hair,* six pieces of grey shirting, each ten cubits long, and three bathing napkins a year. She also gets an extra piece of cloth at the Durgá-pujá festival, when the most wretched pauper, somehow or other, puts on new clothes. Some of the widow cooks have certainly seen better days, but the vicissitudes of fortune have reduced them

* In order to preserve the hair and keep it clean, all Hindoo females in Bengal use cocoanut oil for the head; they however rub their bodies with mustard oil before bathing. Young ladies occasionally use pomatum, bear's grease, soap, etc., though, in a religious sense, this is desecration.

to poverty. As a rule, they bear the load of misfortune with the greatest patience. They come chiefly from the villages, and it speaks much in favor of the purity of their character that they ungrudgingly submit to the menial offices of a drudge, instead of being seduced into the forbidden paths of life. Of course there are a few black sheep in the flock, but happily their number is very limited. A male cook is always a Bráhman. It is almost superfluous to add that the employment in a family or the admittance of any man-servant into the inner apartments of a Hindoo household, which are emphatically the great centre, as well of domestic happiness as of religious sanctity, is open to many objections.

The second domestic servant that demands a notice at our hands is the *Jhí*, or maid-servant of the family. Her duties are alike onerous and troublesome. Like the potter's wheel she incessantly turns backwards and forwards and knows no rest till about ten o'clock at night. She rises early in the morning, sweeps and washes all the rooms and verandahs inside the house, cleans all the brass utensils of the family, kindles the stove, pounds the kitchen spices, cleans the fish for cooking, and attends to other duties of a household nature. Some maid-servants are almost exclusively employed in taking care of children. Their duties are not so hard as those of the family-*Jhí* indicated above. These females are often drawn from the dregs of society, and their conduct, or rather misconduct, sometimes leads to the most unhappy results. Their wages are about two rupees a month, exclusive of food and clothes. They occasionally make something also by gratuities when carrying presents to relatives and friends.

I next come to the male servants: there are more than half-a-dozen of them in a respectable family, and their services are in the main confined to the outer apartments of the house. They sweep and clean all the rooms, spread white cloth bedding on the floor, change the water of the *hukká* (the first essential both at an ordinary and special reception), fill the

chillam with tobacco, fold the fine black-bordered Simla *Dhuti* and *Uráni* (Babu's native dress suit), put the lamps in order, and go to the Bázár to make purchases. Their pay ranges from three to four rupees a month, exclusive of food and clothes.

A rich Hindoo, however, has a large establishment of servants in addition to those mentioned above. There are durwans (door-keepers), syces (grooms), coachmen, gardeners, sircar, cashier, accountant, etc., each of whom discharges his functions in his own sphere, but they seldom or never come in contact with the female inmates of the house. The cashier is the most important and responsible person, and his income is larger than that of any other servant, because he gets his commission from all tradespeople dealing with the family. All of them get presents of clothes at the great national festival, the Durgá-pujá.

The *Khánsámá* of a Babu is his most favourite servant. From the nature of his office he comes into closest contact with his master: he rubs his body with oil before bathing, and sometimes shampooes him,—a practice which gradually induces idle, effeminate habits, and eventually greatly incapacitates a man for the duties of an active life. Indeed, to study the life of a "big native swell" is to study the character of a consummate oriental epicure, immersed in a ceaseless round of pleasures, and hedged in by a body of unconscionable fellows, distinguished only for their flattery and servility.

Except in isolated instances, the general treatment of domestic servants by their masters is not reprehensible.

Outside of those who understand the peculiar mysteries of the inner life of Hindoo society, very few are aware that a wife—though the mother of three or four children—is forbidden to open her lips or lift her veil in order to speak to her husband in the presence of her mother-in-law, or of any other adult male or female member of the family. She may converse with the children without fear of being exposed to the

charge of impropriety; this is the whole extent of her liberty, but she is imperatively commanded to hold her tongue and drop down her veil whenever she happens to see an elderly member in her way. A phrase used in common parlance (*Bhásúr Bhádrabau*) denotes the utmost privacy, as that which the *wife* of a younger brother should observe towards the elder *brother* of her husband. It is an unpardonable sin in the former, even to come in contact with the very shadow of the latter. The rules of conventionalism have reared an adamantine wall between the two. We have all learnt in our school-days that modesty is a quality which highly adorns a woman, but the peculiar domestic economy of the natives carries this golden rule to the utmost stretch of restriction, verging on sacred religious prohibition.

The general state of Hindoo female society, as at present constituted, exhibits an improved moral tone, presenting an edifying contrast to the grossness of former times as far as popular amusements are concerned. The popular amusements of the Hindoos, like those of many European nations, have rarely been characterised by very strict moral principles. But the loose and immoral amusements of former times do not now so much interest our educated females. The popular Native *Játrás* (dramatic representations) do not now contain those low, obscene expressions, which were usual only some thirty years back; yet they are not altogether pure or elevated. It is true that some of them are touching and pathetic in their themes, not jarring to the moral sense, but admirably adapted to the taste of a people having a supreme respect for the idolatrous and mythological systems, from which most of these *Játrás* are derived. The marvellous and the supernatural always exact an instinctive regard from the ignorant and credulous multitude. The *Pánchâli* (with female actresses only) which is given for the amusement of the females, especially at a second marriage, is sometimes much too obscene and immoral to be tolerated in a zenana having any pretension to

gentility. On such an occasion, in spite of strict conventional restrictions, a depraved taste clearly manifests itself. Much has yet to be done to develop among the females a taste for purer amusements, better adapted to a healthy state of society.

In Hindoo females there is a prominent trait which deserves to be commended. Moses, Mohammed, and Manu, observes Benjamin Disraeli, say that cleanliness is religion. Cleanliness certainly promotes health of body and delicacy of mind. When that excellent prelate, Heber, travelled in a boat on the sacred stream of the Ganges, and saw large crowds of Hindoo females engaged in washing themselves and their clothes on both sides of the river, at the rising and setting of the sun, he most emphatically remarked that cleanliness was the supreme virtue of Hindoo women. In the Upper Provinces, at all seasons of the year, hundreds of women may be daily seen with baskets of flowers in their hands, slowly walking in the direction of the river, and chanting songs in chorus in praise of the "unapproachable sanctuary of Mahádeva, the great glacier-world of the Himálayá, with its wondrous pinnacles, rising 24,000 feet above the level of the sea, and descending into the amethyst-hued ice cavern, whence issues, in its turbulent and noisy infancy, the sacred river of India." They display a purity, a sincerity, a constant and passionate devotion to their faith, which present a striking contrast to the conduct of men steeped in the quagmire of profligacy.

Our ladies bathe their bodies and change their clothes twice in a day, in the morning and in the afternoon; otherwise they are not permitted to take in hand any domestic work.

In large Hindoo households, the lot of the wife who is childless is truly deplorable. While her sisters are rejoicing in the juvenile fun and frolics of their children, sporting with all the elasticity of a light, free, and buoyant heart, she sits sulkily aloof, and inwardly repines at the unkind ordinance of *Bidhátá*, and earnestly invokes *Má Shasthí* (the patron deity

of children) to grant her the inestimable boon of offspring, without which this butterfly life is unsanctified, unprofitable and hollow.

The barrenness of a Hindoo female is denounced as a sin, for the atonement of which certain religious rites are performed, and incessant prayers offered to all the terrestrial and celestial gods; but, all her superstitious practices proving vain, her misery is only intensified.

In the beginning of this sketch I set out by stating that the peculiar constitution of Hindoo society bears an affinity to the old patriarchal system. This is true to a very great extent. The system has its advantages and disadvantages, which are, in a great measure, inseparable from it. If properly weighed in the scale, the latter will most assuredly counterbalance the former; so much so that, in the great majority of cases, discord and disquietude are the inevitable result of joint fraternization. Leadership certainly implies organization; it formed the nucleus of the patriarchal system. But it is simply absurd to expect that there should always be a happy marriage of minds in all cases, between so many men and women living together, endowed with different degrees of culture and influenced by adverse interests and sentiments. In the nature of things, it is impossible that all the members of a large family, having separate and specific objects of their own, should coalesce and cordially co-operate to promote the general welfare of a family, under a common leader or head. The millennium is not yet come. Seven brothers living together with their wives and children, under one and the same paternal roof, cannot reasonably be expected to abide in a state of perfect harmony, so long as selfishness and incongruous tastes and interests are continually at work to sap the very foundation of friendliness and good followship. Union is strength; but harmonious union, under the peculiar regimé indicated above, is already a remarkable exception in the present state of Hindoo society. On careful inquiry it will be found, that

women are at the bottom of that mischievous discord which eats into the very vitals of domestic felicity. Separation, therefore, is the only means that promises to afford relief from this social incubus; and to separation many families have now resorted, much after the fashion of the dominant race, with a view to the uninterrupted enjoyment of domestic happiness.

Having briefly indicated in the preceding lines the chief members of a Hindoo household in their several relations and characters, it is scarcely necessary for me to add, that whenever this interesting group consisting of sweet children, loving husbands and wives, and affectionate parents and brothers, is animated by virtue, recognizing the obligations of duty, the divinity of conscience, and the moral connection of the present and future life, then all the blessings of peace, joy and moral order will be found diffused around the social and domestic hearth.

II.

THE BIRTH OF A HINDOO.

THE birth of a Hindoo into the household of which he is to form a member is attended with observances enjoined, more or less, by the religion he inherits. It has been said that, by tradition and instinct, as well as by early habits, he is a religious character. He is born religiously, lives religiously, eats religiously, walks religiously, writes religiously, sleeps religiously, and dies religiously. His everyday life is an endless succession of rites and ceremonies which he observes with the most sacred care. From his very birth his mind is imbued with superstitious ideas, which subsequent mental culture can hardly ever eradicate.

It is now generally known that Hindoo girls are betrothed even in their tenderest years, and that the solemnization of the marriage takes place whenever they attain to the age of puberty. Thus it is not uncommon for a young wife to be delivered of her first child in her thirteenth year, though the glory of motherhood is more frequently not realized until the fourteenth or fifteenth year. When the period of delivery arrives, and to her it is an awful period, the girl is taken into a room called Sutikághar, or Áturghar, where no male members of the family are admitted. She is made to wear a red-bordered robe, and two images of the goddess *Shashthí* made of cow-dung are placed near the threshold of the room to be daily worshipped with rice and *durva* grass, for one month—the period of her confinement. If the labor be protracted, she often suffers greatly from the want of a skilful

surgeon or even a proper midwife. Before the founding of that noble Institution, the Calcutta Medical College, proper midwives were not procurable, because they had had no systematic training; the profession was chiefly confined to the *Dome* and *Bagdi* caste, yet some of these were known to have acquired a tolerable fortune. Their fee varied from 5 to 50 rupees, besides clothes and other gifts; the poor, certainly, giving less. For some years past, a strong belief has existed among some women that delivery in the name of the god Hari (Krishna) is very safe. They that follow this religious regimé are believed, in the majority of cases, to have passed through the struggle of childbirth quite scathless. They use no *jhál* or *tháp*,* bathe in cold water immediately after delivery, take the ordinary food of *dál*, *váth*, curry, fish and tamarind, after offering them to the god Hari; and on the 30th day they perform a pujá (worship), consecrating in honor of the god a quantity of sweetmeats (*sandesh* and *bátasá*) which they finally distribute among children and others. This distribution is called Harirlút. This strong faith in the god seems to enable them to pass through the period of confinement without danger. If the offspring of such women become strong, their strength is attributed to the mercy of the said god.†

A woman that follows the old prescribed practice has to take *jhál* and *tháp*, and go through a strict course of diet, abstaining altogether from the use of cold water or any cooling beverage. She has to undergo the action of heat for at least five hours a day. The newborn babe is rubbed all over with warm mustard oil—an application which is considered the best preserv-

* *Jhál* is a preparation of certain drugs to act as an antidote against cold, puerperal fever, and other diseases incident to childbirth. It often proves efficacious. *Thâp* is the application of heat to the body.

† For observances during the period of pregnancy, see Note A in Appendix.

ative of health in children. Exposure of the mother in any shape is most strictly prohibited, and certain indigenous drugs and warm applications are used as an antidote against all diseases of a puerperal character.

While undergoing the throes of nature, the exhausted spirit of the expectant mother is buoyed up by the fond hope of having a *male* child, which, in the estimation of a Hindoo female, is worth a world of suffering.

In the event of the child turning out a female, her friends try to encourage the mother for the moment with the assurance that the child is a male, a lovely and sweet child, ushered into the world under the peculiar auspices of the goddess Shasthí. Such assurances help very much to keep up her spirit for the time being, but when she is brought to her senses and does not hear the sound of the conch,* her delusion is removed, sorrow and disappointment take the place of joy and expectation, her buoyant spirit collapses and a strong reaction sets in. She curses the day, she curses her fate. But "such is the make and mechanism of human nature" that she soon resigns herself to the wise dispensations of an overruling Providence. She gradually feels a stronger affection for the female child, and rears it with all the care and tenderness of a mother; she caresses and fondles it as if it were a boy, and her affection grows warmer with its growth. This is natural and inevitable. At the birth of a male child, the occurrence is immediately announced by *sankha-dhaní* (the sound of the conch); musicians come without being sent for, and play the *tom-tom:* the family barber bears the happy tidings to all the nearest relatives, and is rewarded with presents of money and cloth. Oil, sweetmeats, fish, curdled milk, and other things are presented to the relatives and neighbours, who, in return, offer their congratulations. A rich Hindoo,

* According to custom, a conch or large shell is sounded at the birth of a male child. Its silence is the sign of sorrow.

though he studies domestic economy very carefully, is, however, apt to loosen his purse strings at the birth of a son and heir. Forgetting her trouble and agony, the mother implores *Bidhátá** for the longevity of the child. She gladly takes it to her breast, and her heart swells with joy every time she looks at its face.

On the second day after delivery, she gets a little sago and *chiray-vájá* (a sort of parched rice). On the third day, the same diet, with the addition of a single grain of boiled rice, and a little fried potatoe or *pull-bull*, that she may use those things afterwards with safety. On the fifth day, if everything is right, the room is washed and she is allowed to come out of it for a short time; a little boiled rice and *moong-dál* is her diet that day.

On the sixth day, the image of the goddess *Shasthí* is worshipped in front of the room where the child was born, because she is the protectress of all children. The pujá is called the *Seyteyrá*-pujá (worship). Offerings of rice, plantains, sweetmeats, cloths, milk, &c., are presented to the goddess by the officiating priest, and the following articles are placed in the room for the *Bidhátá Purus* (god of fate) in order that he may note down unseen on the forehead of the child its future destiny, *viz.*, a palm leaf, a Bengali pen with ink, a serpent's skin, a brick from the temple of the god Shiva, and two kinds of fruit, *ántmorá* and *veylá*, a little wool, gold and silver. On the eighth day is held the ceremony of *Átcowray*, or the distribution of eight kinds of parched peas, rice, sweetmeats, with cowries and pice, amongst the children of the house and neighbourhood. On the evening of that day, the children assemble, and with a *kulo* (winnowing fan) go up three times to the door of the room, and beat it (the kulo) with small sticks, asking at the same in chorus "how is the child doing," and shouting, "let it rest in peace on the lap of

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* Bidhátá is the god of fate.

its mother." These juvenile ceremonies, if ceremonies they may be called, give infinite delight to the children, who are sometimes prompted by the older members of the family to indulge in jocular abuse of the father, not of course to irritate but to amuse him. At the birth of a female child, in consequence of the depreciation in which it is held, this ceremony is observed on a very poor scale. On the thirty-first day after the birth, the ceremony of *Shasthí*-pujá is again performed. Hence a woman, who has had twelve or more children, is called *Shasthí-Burí*, or "Shasthí's old woman." Before a twig of a *Bata* tree, the priest, repeating the usual incantation, presents offerings of rice, fruits, sweetmeats, cloths, parched peas and rice, oil, turmeric, betel, betel-nuts, two duck eggs, and twenty-one small wicker baskets filled with *khai* (parched rice) plantains and *bátásá*, which are all given to a number of women whose husbands are alive. It is on this occasion that the priest is also required to perform the worship of the goddess *Subachaní*,* one of the forms of Durgá.

When the father first goes to see the child, he puts a gold coin into its hand and lays his benediction on its head. Other relatives who may be present at the time do the same.

All respectable Hindoos keep an exact record of the birth of a child, especially of a boy. Every family has its *Daibajna*, or astrologer, who prepares a horoscope, in which he notes down the day, the hour, and the minute of the birth of the child, opens the roll of its fate, and describes what shall happen to it during its life. These horoscopes are so much relied on, that if it is stated therein that the stellar mansion under which the child was born was not good, and that it shall be exposed to serious dangers, either from sikness or accident, at any period of its life, every possible care is taken, through *Grahajág* and *Sastyán* (religious atonement), to propitiate the god of fate, and ward off the apprehended danger before it comes to pass. These

* For the popular story of the goddess Subachaní, see Note B.

papers are carefully preserved by the parents, who refer to them when anything important, good or evil, happens to the child. A Hindoo astrologer is a man of high pretensions; he dives into the womb of futurity and foretells what shall happen to a man in this life, without suspecting for a moment that our Creator has not vouchsafed to us the powers of divination. In a court of justice these papers are of great value in verifying the exact age of a person; and at marriage, or rather before it, they are carefully consulted as to the character of the stellar mansion under which both the boy and girl were born, and the peculiar circumstances by which they were surrounded. Many a match is broken off because the signs in the zodiac do not harmonize; for instance, if the boy be of the *Lion-rass* (sign) and the girl of the *Lamb-rass*, the one, it is said, will destroy the other. These papers, therefore, are of very great importance when a matrimonial alliance is being negotiated.

When a male child is six months old, the parents make preparations for the celebration of the *Annaprásan*, or christening, when not only a name is given to the child, but it gets boiled rice for the first time. On this occasion, the father is required to perform a *Biddhi Shrád*, so called from the increase and preservation of the members of the family. Some who live near Calcutta celebrate the rite by going to Kálí Ghāt, and procuring a little boiled rice from one of the priests of the sacred fane at a cost of eight to ten rupees. When the rice is brought home, a few grains are put into the mouth of the child by a male member of the family. The ceremony being thus performed, the child from that day is allowed to take cooked food when necessary. Such families as do not choose to go to Kálí Ghát, observe the ceremony at home, and spend from 200 to 300 rupees in feeding the Bráhmans, friends and relatives, who, in return, offer their benediction and give from one to ten rupees each to the child, which being shaved, clad in a silk garment, and adorned with gold ornaments, is brought out for the purpose after the feast.

It is on such occasions that splendid dowries are settled on some children, in grants of land or of Government securities, and I have known instances in which a dowry amounted to a lakh of rupees. Of late years, the practice of making gifts to the child being regarded as an obnoxious tax, the good taste of some has led them to confine the entertainment within the circumscribed limit of their own family. Superstition has its share in the choice of the name to be given to the child. The Hindoos are generally named after their gods and goddesses, under a belief that the repetition of such names in the daily intercourse of life will not only absolve them from sins, but give them present happiness and the hope of blessedness to all eternity. Some parents purposely give an unpleasant name to a child that may be born after repeated bereavements, believing that thereby the curses of the wicked will fall harmless on its head. Such names are Nafar, Gobardhan, Guie, Tincowri, Panchcowri, Dukhi, &c. In the case of girls a mother who has many daughters, and does not wish for more, gives them such names as *Kshyanta* (cessation), *Árná* (no more), *Ghríná* (despised), *Chhi-chhi* (an expression of contempt).*

Except under extraordinary circumstances, a Hindoo mother seldom engages a wetnurse; she continues to nurse her child till it is three or four years old, and attends at the same time

* Apart from the horrid practice of female infanticide, now put a stop to by a humane Government, many instances might be given of the extreme detestation in which the birth of a girl is held even by her mother. Among others I may cite the following: A woman, who was the mother of four daughters and of no son, at the time of her fifth delivery laid aside one thousand rupees for distribution among the poor in the event of her getting a son, when, lo! she gave birth to a female child *again*. What did she do? She at once flung aside the money, mournfully declaring at the same time, that she had already four fire-brands incessantly burning in her bosom and this was the *fifth*, which was enough to burn her to death.

to her numerous household duties, which are by no means light or easy. Indolent loveliness, reclining on a sofa, is not a truthful picture of her life; it may be she has to cook for her husband, because he is such an orthodox Hindoo that he will on no account accept food (such as rice, dál, vegetables, curry &c.) from any other hand. In such families, the woman has to rise very early, perform her daily ablutions and attend to the duties of the kitchen; and before nine the breakfast must be ready, as the husband has probably to attend his office at ten. It is not an uncommon sight to see a woman cooking, suckling her child, and scolding her maid-servant at one and the same time. A Hindoo woman is not only laborious, but patient and submissive to a degree; let the amount of privation be ever so great, she is seldom known to murmur or complain. All her happiness is centred in the proper discharge of her domestic and social duties. So simple and unambitious is a Hindoo female, that she generally considers herself amply rewarded if the food prepared by her hands is appreciated by those for whom it is intended. It is a lamentable fact that, expert as she doubtless is in the art of cooking, she is totally incapable of nourishing the minds of her children with any solid intellectual food worthy of the name. As already indicated, she communicates to her child what she can out of her own store of simple ideas and superstitious beliefs, but her best gift is the care and tenderness which she lavishes upon it, and the wakening of its young soul to return her love.

III.

THE HINDOO SCHOOL BOY.

FROM the time when the young Hindoo passes from the infant stage of "mewling and puking in the nurse's arms" till he goes to school, he is generally a bright-eyed, active playful boy, full of romping spirits, the favourite of all around him. His diet is light, and his health generally good. He usually runs about for three or four years *in puris naturalibus*, and among the lower classes a string is tied round his loins with a metal charm attached to frighten away the evil spirits. When he attains the age of five, the period fixed by his parents for beginning his education, he is sent to a *Pátsálá* (vernacular infant school), not, however, without making a puáj to *Saraswatí*, the goddess of learning. On the day appointed, and it must be a lucky day according to the Hindoo almanac, the child bathes and puts on a new *duhti* (garment) and is taken to the place of worship, where the officiating priest has previously made all the necessary arrangements. Rice, fruits, and sweetmeats are then offered to the goddess, who is religiously invoked to pour her blessing on the head of the child. After this, the priest takes away all the things offered to the goddess, with his usual gift of one or two rupees, and the child is taken by his parents to the *Pátsálá* and formally introduced to the *Gurumaháshaya*, or master of the school. With the natural curiosity of children all present gaze on the new comer as if he were a being of a strange species. But the old boys soon become familiar with the new one, and a sort of intimacy gradually springs up amongst them. In this country a boy

is made to learn the letters of the alphabet, not by pronouncing them, but by writing them on the ground with a small piece of *khari*, or soft stone, and copying them over and over again until he thoroughly masters them. Five letters are set him at a time. After this he is taught to write on palm leaves with ink and a wooden pen, then on a slate and on green plantain leaves, and, finally, on paper. At every stage of his progress he is expected to make some present to his master in the shape of food, clothes, and money. A village school begins early in the morning, and continues till eleven, after which the boys are allowed to go home for their breakfast; they return at two, and remain in the school till evening, when all the boys are made to stand up in a row, and one of the most advanced amongst them shouts out the multiplication and numeration tables, while all are taught to repeat after him and to commit to memory what they hear. With a view to encourage the early attendance of the boys, a *Gurumaháshaya* sometimes resorts to the odd method of the *hathchhari* system in his *Pátsálá*, which means that all the boys are to have stripes of the cane on the hand, in arithmetical progression, in the order of their coming, that is, the first comer is to have one stripe, the second two, and so on, in consecutive order. The last boy is sometimes made to stand on one leg for an hour or so to the infinite amusement of the earlier comers. The system certainly has a good effect in ensuring early attendance.

The course of instruction in such schools embraces reading in the vernacular, a little of arithmetic and writing and the keeping of accounts for those who are thought clever boys. Stupid and wicked pupils are generally beaten with a cane, but their names are never struck off the register, as is the case in English schools. Sometimes a truant is compelled to stand on one leg, holding up a brick in his right hand, or to keep his arms stretched out till he is completely exhausted. Another mode of punishment consists in applying the leaves of *Bichuti* (a stinging plant) to the back of a naughty boy, who natur-

ally smarts under the torture. The infliction of such cruel punishments sometimes leads the boys to conspire against the master for the purpose of retaliation, which generally results in bringing him to his senses. Hindoo boys are extremely sensitive, and are very apt to resent any affront to which they are cruelly subjected by their master.* The fee in a village school is from a penny to three-pence a head per month, but the master has additional perquisites in the shape of victuals and pice. There is a common saying among the Hindoos that in twelve months there are thirteen *párbans*, or festivals, implying thereby, that there are far too many *párbans*. On every such occasion the boys are expected to bring presents for the master, and any unfortunate boy who fails to bring one is denied the usual indulgence of a holiday. Little boys are seldom fond of reading, they would gladly sacrifice anything to purchase a holiday. It is not an uncommon thing for a boy to steal pice from his mother's box in order to satisfy the demands of his master at the festival. The principle on which a village school is conducted is essentially defective in morality. Instead of teaching the rules of good conduct and enforcing the first principles of morality, it often sadly defeats the primary object of a good education, namely, the formation of a sound moral and virtuous character. It is a disgrace to hear a schoolmaster, whose conduct should be a pattern of moral excellence, use towards his pupils, for little faults, the most vulgar epithets, the effects of which are seldom obliterated from their minds, even in

* *Apropos*, I may mention here the following incident. A few years back a well-known master of the Hindoo School being placed in a very awkward position, had to call in the aid of the Police. Some Sailors and Negroes—always a set of desperate characters—were retained by the boys for the purpose of insulting him in the public street, but the timely interference of the Police put a stop to the contemplated brutal assault. This had the effect of inducing the master to behave in future with greater forbearance, if not with more sober judgment.

advanced life. However, such days of obnoxious pedagogism are almost gone by, never to come again, now that the system of primary education has been extended to almost every village in India, under the auspices of our liberal Government. Whilst on this subject I may state that some forty years ago our Government appointed the late Rev. William Adam to be the Commissioner of Education in Bengal. That highly talented and generous philanthropist submitted in his report to Government a scheme of education very similar to what is now introduced throughout Bengal. The scheme was then ignored on account of its great expense, and the Commissioner was so disheartened at the apathy of Government towards the education of the masses, that a few days before his departure from Calcutta, when he took farewell of some of his most distinguished native friends, his parting words were to the following effect: "Your Government is not disposed to encourage those who are its real friends." This reproach has, however, been subsequently removed by the adoption of a primary system of education. The spirit of the times and the growth of enlightened sentiments have gradually inaugurated a comprehensive scheme, which, although still limited in its range, embraces the moral and intellectual improvement of all the people.*

In Calcutta, when a boy is six years old, his parents are anxious to have him admitted into one of the public schools, where he may have an opportunity to learn both the Vernacular and the English languages. He may be said from that day to enter on the first stage of his intellectual disintegration.

* Dr. W. W. Hunter, President of the Education Commission, has, if I mistake not, successfully solved the important problem of Indian education. His comprehensive scheme is based on a system of primary instruction, admirably adapted to carry the blessings of popular enlightenment to the most obscure parts of the empire, which will unquestionably render his name fragrant amongst the teeming millions of India.

The books that are put into his hands gradually open his eyes and expand his intellect; he learns to discern what is right and what is wrong; he reasons within himself and finds that what he had learnt at home was not true, and is led by degrees to renounce his old ideas. Every day brings before his mind's eye the grand truths of Western knowledge, and he feels an irresistible desire, not only to test their accuracy but to advance farther in his scholastic career. He is too young, however, to weigh well everything that comes in his way, but as he advances he finds the light of truth illumine his mind. His parents, if orthodox Hindoos, necessarily feel alarmed at his new ideas and try to counteract their influence by the stereotyped arguments of the wisdom of our forefathers; but however inimically disposed, they dare not stop his progress, because they see that English education is the surest passport to honor and distinction. In this manner he continues to move through the various classes of the middle schools till he is advanced to one of the higher educational institutions connected with the University, and attains his sixteenth or seventeenth year, which is popularly regarded as his marriageable age.

IV.

VOWS OF HINDOO GIRLS.

WHEN a girl is five years of age, she is initiated by an elderly woman in the preparatory rites of *Bratas*, or vows, the primary object of which is to secure her a good husband, and render her religious and happy throughout life. While a boy is sent to the Pátsálá, a girl is commonly forbidden to read or write, but has to begin her course of Bratas. The germs of superstition being thus early implanted in her mind, she is more or less influenced by them ever after. Formed by nature to be docile, pliant and susceptible, she readily takes to the initial course of religious exercises.

The first rite with which she has to commence is called the "Shiva-pujá," after the example of the goddess Durgá, who performed this ceremonial that she might obtain a good husband; and Shiva is regarded as a model husband. On the 30th day of Chaitra, being the last day of the Bengali year, she is required to make two little earthen images of this god, and placing them on the rind of a bael-fruit (wood-apple) with leaves, she begins to perform his worship; but before doing so, she is enjoined to wash herself and change her clothes, a requirement which enforces upon her, thus early, cleanliness and purity in habits and manners, if not exactly in thought and feeling. Her mind being filled with young susceptibilities, she imbibes almost instinctively an increasing predilection for the performance of religious ceremonies. Sprinkling a few drops of holy water on the heads of the images, she repeats

the following words: "All homage to Shiva, all homage to Shiva, all homage to *Hara* (another name of Shiva), all homage to Bajjara," meaning two small earthen balls, like peas, which are stuck on the body of the images. She is then to become absorbed in meditation about the form and attributes of the god, and afterwards she says her prayers three times in connection with Shiva's various names, which I need not here mention. Offerings of flowers and bael leaves are then presented to the god with an incantation. Being pleased, Mahádeva (Shiva) is supposed to ask from heaven what Brata or religious ceremony Gaurí (Durgá) is performing. Gaurí replies, she is worshipping Shiva, that she may get him for her husband, because, as said before, Shiva is a model husband.

Then comes the Brata of Hari or Krishna. The two feet of the god being painted in white sandal paste on a brass plate, the girl worships him with flowers and sandal paste. The god, seeing this, is supposed to ask what girl worships his feet, and what boon she wants. She replies: "May the prince of the kingdom be my husband, may I be beautiful and virtuous, and be the mother of seven wise and virtuous sons and two handsome daughters." She asks that her daughters-in-law may be industrious and obedient; that her sons-in-law may shine in the world by their good qualities; that her granary and farmyard may be always full, the former with corn of all sorts, and the latter with milch cows; that when she dies all those who are near and dear to her may enjoy long life and prosperity; and that she may eventually, through the blessing of Hari, die on the banks of the sacred Ganges, and thereby procure an entrance into heaven.

It is worthy of remark here that even young Hindoo girls, in the exercise of their immature discretion, make a distinction between the gods in the choice of their husbands. In the first Brata, that of Shiva, a tender girl of five years of age is taught, almost unconsciously as it were, to prefer that god to Krishna for her husband, because the latter, according to the

Hindoo Shástras, is reputed to have borne a questionable character. I once asked a girl why she would not have Krishna for her husband. She promptly answered that that god disported with thousands of Gopinís (milkmaids) and was therefore not a *good* god, while Shiva was devotedly attached to his one wife, Durgá. The explanation was full of significance from a moral and religious point of view.

The third Brata involves the worship of ten images. This requires that the girl should paint on the floor ten images of deified men, as well as of gods, with *pitali* or rice paste. Offering them flowers and sandal paste, she asks that she may have a father-in-law like Dasaratha, the father of Ráma Chandra; a mother-in-law like Kausalyá, his mother; a husband like Ráma Chandra himself; a *dayur*, or husband's brother, like Lakshmana, Ráma's younger brother; a mother like Shasthí, whose children are all alive; like Kuntí, whose three sons were renowned for their justice, piety, courage, and heroism; like the Ganges, whose water allays the thirst of all; like mother earth, whose patience is inexhaustible. And, to crown the whole, she prays that she may, like Durgá, be blessed with an affectionate and devoted husband; that, like Draupadí (the wife of the five Pándavas), she may be remarkable for her industry, devotion and skill in the culinary art; and that she may be, like Sítá (the wife of Ráma Chandra), whose chastity and attachment to her husband were worthy of all praise These three Bratas take place in the Bengali month of Baisakh (April), which is popularly regarded as a good month for the performance of meritorious works. The prayer contained in them expresses the highest female wish in entire accord with the injunctions of the holy Shástra, but how often are the amiable qualities enumerated above lost in the actual conflicts of life, in which evil desires predominate and swallow up every generous impulse!

The next Brata is called the *Sanjuti Brata*. It is solely intended to ward off the thousand evils of polygamy—an un-

natural institution, which ought to be prohibited in every civilized community. To get rid of the consequences of this monstrous evil, a girl of five years of age is taught to offer her invocation to God, and in the outburst of her juvenile feeling is almost involuntarily led to indulge in all manner of curses and imprecations against the possible rival of her bed. Nor can we find fault with her conduct, because "an overmastering and brooding sense" of some great future calamity thus early haunts her mind.

In performing the *Sanjuti Brata*, the girl paints on the floor with rice paste a variety of objects, such as the bough of a flower tree; a pálki (palanquin), containing a man and a woman, with the sun and moon over it; the Ganges and the Jamuna, with boats on them; the temple of Mahádeva with Mahádeva in it; various ornaments of gold and precious stones, houses, markets, a garden, a granary, a farmyard and a number of other things, all intended to represent worldly prosperity. After painting these, she invokes Mahádeva and prays for his blessing. An elderly lady, more experienced in domestic matters, then begins to dictate, and the girl repeats after her a volley of abuses and curses against her *Satin*, or rival wife, in the possible future.

> "There, stripped. fair rhetoric languished on the ground,
> And shameful Billingsgate her robes adorn."

The following are a few specimens of the curses; I wish I could have transcribed them in metre :—

> " *Bayri, Bayri, Bayri* (a cooking utensil),
> May my *Satin* become a slave ?
> *Khángrá, Khángrá, Khángrá* (a broomstick),
> May my *Satin* be exposed to infamy !
> *Hathá, Hathá, Hathá* (a cooking utensil),
> May I devour my *Satin's* head !
> *Gilay, Gilay, Gilay* (a fruit),
> May my *Satin* have spleen ;
> *Paki, Paki, Paki* (a bird),
> May my *Satin* die and may I see her from the top of my house ;
> *Mayna, Mayna, Mayna* (a bird),
> May I never be cursed with a *Satin !*

May I cut an *Aswatha* tree, erect a house there, cause my *Satin* to die and paint my feet with my *Satin's* blood!

I might swell the list of these curses, but I fear they would grate upon the ears of civilized readers.

The performance of the *Sanjuti Brata* springs out of a desire to see a *Satin*, or rival wife, become the victim of all manner of evils, extending even to the loss of life itself, simply because a plurality of wives is the source of perpetual disquietude and misery. By nature, a woman is so constituted that she can never bear the sight of a rival wife. In civilized countries, the evil is forbidden by law, but in India the Legislature makes no provision whatever for its suppression. A feeling of burning jealousy is always aroused wherever there is a second wife to poison the perennial source of domestic felicity. So acutely sensitive is a Hindoo lady in this respect, that she would rather suffer the miseries of widowhood than be cursed with the presence of a *Satin*, whose very name awakens in her mind the bitterest and most envenomed feelings. She can make up her mind to give away a share of her most valuable worldly enjoyments, but she can never give a share of her husband's *affection* to any one on earth. To enjoy the exclusive monopoly of a husband's love is the life-long prayer of a Hindoo woman. She utters it in her earliest girlhood, and carries it with her until the last spark of life becomes extinct. This certainly indicates the prompting of a very strong *natural* feeling.

V.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.

THE Hindoos have a strong belief that to solemnize the marriage of their children at an early age is a meritorious act, as discharging one of the primary obligations of life. They are, therefore, very anxious to have their sons and daughters formally married during their own lifetime. Sometimes children are pledged to each other even in infancy, by the mutual agreement of the parents; and in most cases the girl is married when a mere child of from eight to ten years, all unconscious as yet of the real meaning and obligations of the relation, although her girlish fancies have been continually directed to it. Matches in the case of good families are commonly brought about in the following way:—

When an unmarried boy attains his seventeenth or eighteenth year, numbers of professional men, called *Ghataks* or matchmakers, come to the parents with overtures of marriage. These men are destitute of principle, but know how to pander to the frailties of human nature; most of them are gross flatterers, and endeavour to impose on the parents in the most barefaced manner. As they live on their wits, their descriptive powers and insinuating manners are almost matchless. When the qualities of a girl are to be commended, they indulge in a strain of exaggeration, and unblushingly declare, "she is beautiful as a full moon, the symmetry of her person is exact, her teeth are like the seeds of a pomegranate, her voice is remarkably sweet like that of the cuckoo, her gait is

graceful, she speaks like the goddess *Lakshmí*, and will bring fortune to any family she may be connected with." The Hindoos have a notion that the good fortune of a husband depends on that of the wife, hence a woman is considered as an emblem of *Lakshmí*, the goddess of fortune. This is the highest commendation she can possess.*

If the qualities of a youth are to be appraised, they describe him thus; he is as beautiful as *Kártik* (the god of beauty), his deportment is that of a nobleman, he is free from all vices, he studies day and night; in short, he is a precious gem and an ornament of the neighbourhood. The Hindoos know very well that the *Ghataks* as a body are great impostors, and do not believe half that they say. From the day a matrimonial alliance is proposed, the parents on both sides begin to make all sorts of preliminary enquiries as to the purity of the caste, respectability and position in society of the parties concerned. When fully satisfied on these points, they give their verbal consent to the proposed union, but not before the father of the boy has demanded of the father of the girl a certain number of gold and silver ornaments, as well as of *Barábharan*,—*i.e.*, silver and brass utensils, couch, &c, exclusive of (with but few exceptions) a certain amount of money in lieu of *Fulsharjyá*.† Before proceeding further, I should observe that of late years a great change has taken place in the profession of the *Ghataks*. The question of marriage

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* I may be permitted here to observe *en passant* that even a civilized nation, in describing the beauty of a woman, is sometimes apt to adopt the flowery language of Hafiz. At a ministerial banquet sometime ago, the Lord Mayor of London was reported to have said about the Princess of Wales: "She is perfection, she sparkles like a gem of fifty facets, she is light when she smiles, and she is beauty whenever you see her."

† Presents of sweetmeats, fruits, clothes, flowers and sundry other articles on a pretty grand scale from the bride to the bridegroom which will be described more in detail afterwards.

is a question, the solution of which rests, though not absolutely, yet chiefly, with the females. Their voice in such matters has a preponderating influence. Availing themselves of this fact a new class of female *Ghataks*, or rather *Ghatakís*, have sprung up among the people. Hence the occupation of the male *Ghataks* is nearly gone, except in rare cases where nice points of caste distinction are to be decided. The great influence of *Shibí Ghatakí* and *Badní's* mother—two very popular female *Ghatakís*,—is well known to the respectable Hindoo community of Calcutta. These two women have made a decent fortune by plying this trade. Though certainly not gifted with the imaginative powers of a poetic bard of Rájpútáná,* their suasive influence is very telling. They have the rare faculty of making and unmaking matches. From the superior advantage which their sex affords them, they have free access to the inner apartments of any house (even if it were that of a millionaire)—a privilege their male rivals can never expect to enjoy. When likely to be balked by the subtlety of a competitor in trade, they contrive by their sneers to break the match. Their representations regarding a proposed union seldom fail to exercise a great influence on the minds of the zenana females. Relying on the accuracy of their description, which sometimes turns out to be exaggerated, if not false, the mother and other ladies are often led to give their consent to a proposed union. The husband, swayed by the counsel and importunity of his wife, is forced to acquiesce in her choice. He cannot do otherwise, because, as our friend Babu Keshab Chandra Sen has very facetiously observed, "man is a noun in the objective case governed by the active verb woman."†

* A Rajpút prince was said to have given a lakh of rupees to a bard in order to purchase his poetic praise in an assemblage of his countrymen.

† If we consult properly the pages of the history of India from the earliest period, we shall find abundant proofs of the very great influ-

When a *Ghatakí* appears with the proposal of a matrimonial alliance with an educated youth, the first question generally asked is, "Has he passed his examinations?" If so, "how many *passes* has he got?" meaning thereby, how many examinations of the University has he passed through? "Has he got any Jalpáni, or scholarship?" These are difficult questions which must be satisfactorily answered before a negotiation can be effected. That a University degree has raised the marriageable value of a boy, there can be no doubt. If he has successfully passed some of these examinations and got a scholarship, his parents, naturally priding themselves on their valuable possession, demand a preposterously long catalogue of gold ornaments, which it is not often in the power of a family in middling circumstances easily to bestow. The parents of the girl, on the other hand, seeing the long list, demur at first to give their consent, but their demurring is of no avail, marry their daughter they must. The present ruinous scale of marriage expenses must be submitted to at any sacrifice, and after deep cogitation they send a revised schedule (as if marriage were a mere matter of traffic), taking out some costly items, which would press heavily on the purse. In this manner the *Ghatakí* goes backwards and forwards for some time, proposing concessions on both sides, and holding out delusive hopes of future advantages in the event of the carrying out of the marriage. There is a trite saying among

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ence of women. I cannot do better than give the following quotation from Tod's Annals of Rájasthán. What led to the wars of Ráma? The rape of Sitá. What rendered deadly the feuds of the Yadus? The insult of Draupadí, What made prince Nala an exile from Nirwar? His love for Damayantí. What made Rájá Bharti abandon the throne of Avanti? The loss of Pingalá. What subjected the Hindu to the dominion of the Islamite? The rape of the princess of Canouj. In fine, the cause which overturned kingdoms, commuted the sceptre to the pilgrim's staff, and formed the groundwork of all their grand epics, is woman.

the Hindoos, that "a matrimonial alliance cannot be completed without uttering a lakh of words."

The girl's parents, on whose head falls the greatest burden, are eventually led to succumb by the consideration that they have secured a desirable match,—namely, a *passed* student. If not in affluent circumstances, as is generally the case, they are obliged to raise the requisite sum of money by loan, which sows, in many instances, the seeds of much future embarrassment. At a very moderate calculation, a tolerably respectable marriage now-a-days costs between two and three thousand rupees (about £200),—sometimes more. There is another native adage which says, "we want twine for thatching, and money for wedding." A respectable Hindoo gentleman, who has four or five daughters to give in marriage, and whose income is not large, is often reduced to the greatest embarrassment by the extravagant expenses of a marriage. The rich do not care much what they are required to spend. All that they look for is a desirable match. It is the middle and poorer classes, who form by far the largest part of the population in every country, that suffer most severely from the present high scale of matrimonial charges. The late Rájá Rájkrishna, Babus Ramdulál Dey,* Nimae Charan Mallik, and other Hindoo millionaires, spent extraordinary sums of money on the marriage of their sons. The amount in each instance far exceeded a lakh of rupees. The annals of Rájasthan furnish numerous examples of lavish expenditure, varying from five to ten lakhs of rupees and upwards, on the solemnization of nuptials. There was a spirit of rivalry which animated the princes to surpass each other in magnificence and splendour on such occasions, regardless alike of the state of their exchequer, and the demoralizing effects of their conduct.

* Besides the marriage expenses, this man gave to his five sons-in-law fifty thousand Rupees each, as well as a house worth ten thousand Rupees more.

Marriages in such a magnificent style are seldom to be seen in Calcutta now-a-days, not because of the distaste of the people for such frivolities, but because of the lamentable decline and poverty of the former magnates of the land. It is painful to reflect that the present scale of marriage expenditure among the middle classes is in an inverse ratio to their income. The exertions made sometime ago by Munshi Pyárí Lál for the reduction of marriage expenses would have doubtless conferred a lasting boon on the Hindoo community, if the object had been crowned with success; but as the Legislature has no control over such matters, relating as they do to purely private affairs, the noble scheme resulted in failure. It is quite optional with parties to go to heavy expenses on such occasions; no act of Government without the voice of the people could restrain them in this respect. Any social reform to be permanent and effectual must be carried out by the will of the whole people.

When the preliminaries of a marriage have been settled, a person, on each side, is deputed by turns to see the boy and the girl. It is customary to see the girl first. When the friends of the bridegroom, therefore, come for the purpose, they sit down in the outer apartment of the house, whilst the bride is engaged in her toilet duty. A short time after, glittering in jewels and accompanied by a maid-servant as well as by the *Ghatakí*, she makes her appearance. The first thing she does on entering the room is to make a *pranám*, or bow, to all present, and then she is asked to squat down on the clean white sheet spread on the floor. A solemn pause ensues for a minute or so, when one of the company, more officious than the rest, breaks the silence by putting to her a few questions. She naturally feels herself somewhat out of her element in the midst of so many strangers, and shows a degree of embarrassment almost distressing to witness. This internal agitation, arising partly from modesty and partly from anxiety, causes her even to stammer. Her engrossing

desire for the time being is, according to the early vow she has made, that she may have a *good* husband with lots of jewels. "What is your name, mother?" is the first question. She may diffidently reply in a half suppressed voice "*Girí Bálá.*" "Who is that sitting before you?"—perhaps pointing to the girl's father. She says, "My father." "Can you read and write?" If she say "yes," she is asked to read a little out of her book.

The *Ghatakí* here plays the part of a panegyrist by admiring the amiable qualities of the girl, who, she adds, is the very type of *Lakshmí* (the goddess of prosperity). While this examination is going on in the outer apartment, the anxious mother, whose heart is throbbing as she watches the scene from behind a half-closed window, feels no ease, until she hears that her daughter has acquitted herself creditably. Before the girl leaves the room, the father or brother of the boy puts a gold mohur into her hand as a tangible proof of approval, and bids her retire. It is needless to say that she feels herself relieved, quite glad and free, when she again sees the faces of her mother and sisters, whose joy returns with her return.

This interview is called *pákká deykhá*, or the confirmatory visit. All the Brahmins, *Ghataks* and *Ghatakís*, and other Kulins, who may be present on the occasion, receive from two to four rupees each. The servants of the house are not forgotten, they too receive each a rupee. If this interview takes place in the morning, the parties return home without breakfast, it being customary with them not to eat anything before bathing and performing their daily worship. If in the evening, they are treated to a good dinner, consisting of the best fruits of the season, sweet and sour milk, and sweetmeats of various kinds. It is on such ceremonious occasions that the Hindoos make a display of their wealth by serving the dinner to their new friends in silver salvers, plates, mugs and *pándán*, (betel box). Almost every respectable gentleman keeps a good assortment of these silver articles. They are, however

reserved for special purposes, and used only on special occasions. As a rule, the people are not, like Europeans, fond of investing their money in platedware, because it is, comparatively speaking, of little exchangeable value in times of need and distress.

It is now the turn of the boy to be examined in a similar way as to his scholastic acquirements. When the father and the relatives of the girl pay the return visit, they generally bring with them a graduate of the University. Should the boy be one who has successfully passed the Matriculation standard, he is not subjected to so strict an examination as one who does not enjoy the same dignity. In both cases, however, they must undergo some examination, in English literature, composition, grammar, history, &c. However intelligent and expert at other times, a boy betrays a lamentable deficiency when required to undergo an examination in the presence of his intended father-in-law and a University graduate. The thought of failure weighs heavy on his mind. He finds himself bewildered in a maze of confusion. If he does not actually stammer, he talks at least very slowly and diffidently; and if called upon to write, his hand shakes, and he becomes extremely nervous. After this trial is over, the boy retires with mingled feelings of misgiving and complacency. He receives, however, in his turn a gold mohur. The gentlemen who have come to see him are then asked to dinner in the way described above. The same display of silverware is made on the occasion, and nearly the same amount of presents of money made to the Bráhmans, Kulins and others.

When both parties are satisfied as to the desirableness of the union, a lucky day is fixed for drawing up a *pattra*, or written agreement, in which, say a Kulin of superior caste engages in writing to give his son in marriage with the daughter of either a second Kulin, or, as is often the case, of a Maulik, an inferior in caste. This *Pattra* is written by a Bráhman on Bengali paper with Bengali pen and ink (as if English

writing materials would desecrate such a sacred contract), and it must consist of an odd number of lines, say seven or nine. An invocation to the Prajápati (Lord) must head the *Pattra*, the purport of which will run as follows: "I, Rám Chandra Basu, do engage to give my second son, Gupináth Basu, in marriage with Nabinmaní Dasí, the eldest daughter of Issen Chandra Datta, who is also bound by this contract; the marriage to be solemnized on a day to be named hereafter." Here the signatures of both the fathers, as well as of the witnesses, follow. When finished, it is rolled up and tied with a red thread. The *Kulin* gentleman hands it to the *Maulik* gentleman, when the latter embraces the former, and gives him at the same time *Kula-marjádá* and *Pattra-darshani*, as a mark of respect for his superior caste,—say about fifty rupees. The articles required for the matrimonial contract are paddy, durva grass, turmeric, betel-leaf, betel-nut, sandal paste, cowries (small shells) and *áltá*,*—all which are considered as conducive to the future welfare of the boy† and girl. When the contract is

* A thin stuff like paper with which Hindoo females redden the edges of their feet. A widow is not allowed to use it. In the absence of shoes, which they are forbidden to wear, this red colour looking like slippers, heightens the beauty of their tiny feet. It is applied once a week.

† In the selection of a bridegroom, outward appearances are not always to be trusted. The late Babu Ashutash Dey, a millionaire, had a very beautiful grand-daughter to give in marriage. As was to be expected, *Ghataks* and *Ghatakis* had been rummaging the whole town and its suburbs for a suitable match, one who would possess all the recommendations of a good education, a respectable family, and a fair, prepossessing appearance—qualities which are rarely combined in one. Among others, the name of the late Honorable Babu Dwarká Náth Mittra (afterwards a Judge of the High Court) was mentioned. He was then a bachelor, and his reputation as a scholar was spread far and wide. Somehow or other he was brought into the house of Babu Ashutash Dey for the purpose of giving the ladies an opportunity of seeing him. His scholastic attainments were pronounced to be of a very superior order; but, not being blessed with a prepossessing appearance, he was rejected.

religiously ratified, a couple of conches—one for the bridegroom and another for the bride — are sounded by the females, announcing the happy conclusion of this important preliminary, at which all hearts are exhilarated. Arrangements are now made for the dinner of all who may be present at the time. Sometimes fifty to sixty persons are fed. Every care is taken to provide a good dinner for the delectation of the guests, and a *Pattra* on this scale costs from 300 to 400 rupees. The Bráhmans, Kulins, and others receive, as usual, presents of money, and return home replenished in body as well as in purse.

It is worthy of remark that though the distinction of caste still exerts its influence on all the important concerns of our social and domestic life, it is nevertheless fast losing its prestige in the estimation of the enlightened Hindoos. In former days a Kulin occupied a prominent position in society, be his character what it might; but now-a-days the rapid spread of English education, and the manifold advantages derivable from it, have practically impaired his influence and lowered his dignity. A *Kulin* who happens to be the father of a girl married to a *Maulik*, is, in the present day, degraded to the rank of his traditional inferior, simply because he is the father of the girl; he must even be prepared to submit to all sorts of humiliation, and continue to serve the *Maulik* father of the boy as long as the connection lasts. At every popular festival for at least one year he must, according to his rank, make suitable presents to his son-in-law, failing which a latent feeling of discontent arises, which eventually ripens into an open and bitter quarrel.

But to return to the marriage contract. After the entertainment, both parties consult the almanac and fix a day for a ceremony called *Gátra-haridrá*, or the anointment of the body with turmeric. On that day, after bathing and putting on a red bordered cloth,* the bridegroom is made to stand on

* In Hindoo marriages and other ceremonies of a similar nature, *red* is the color indispensably necessary for all kinds of wearing

a grindstone surrounded by four plantain trees, while, five women (one must be of Bráhman caste) whose husbands are alive, go round him five or seven times, anoint his body with turmeric, and touch his forehead at one and the same time with holy water, betel, betel-nuts, a *Srí* made of rice-paste in the shape of a sugarloaf, and twenty other little articles consisting of several kinds of peas, rice, paddy, gold, silver, &c. From this day, the boy carries about a pair of silver nut-crackers, and the girl a pair of *kájalnáthá*,* which must remain with them till the solemnization of the nuptials, for the purpose of repelling evil spirits. A little of the turmeric paste with which the body of the bridegroom has been anointed is sent by the family barber to the bride in a silver cup, and she anoints her body with it. A number of other gifts follow, namely, a large brass vessel of oil, various kinds of perfumery, three pieces of cloth (one must be a richly embroidered, Benares *sári*, one a Dacca *sári* and the other red bordered), a small carpet, a silk musnud with pillows, two mats, some gold trinkets for the head, a few baskets of sweetmeats, some large fishes, sweet and sour milk, and a few garlands of flowers, &c., which cost altogether from two to three hundred rupees, or sometimes more. A rich man sometimes gives a pair of diamond combs and flowers for the hair, of the value of two thousand rupees and upwards. From this, an idea may be formed as to the lavish expenditure of the Hindoos on marriages, even in these hard times. A *few* can afford it, but the *many* are put to their wits'-end to meet the demands thus made upon them.

Two or three days after the ceremony of anointment, the Bengali almanac is again consulted, and a lucky day is

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apparel; even the invitation cards must be on *red* paper. Red is the sign of joy and gaiety, as opposed to black, which is held to be ominous.

* A collyrium case, which contains the black dye with which native females daub their own and their children's eyelids.

appointed for the feast of *Ahibarrabhát*, so called from its being given just before the wedding. On this occasion the father of the bridegroom gives a grand entertainment to the male relatives of the family. As a counterpart to the same the father of the bride gives a similar entertainment to the female relatives of his own family, with this difference only, that in the former case no pálkis are required, whereas in the latter, these covered conveyances have to be engaged for bringing the females. In either case the number of guests generally ranges from two to three hundred; and as the present style of living among the Hindoos in the metropolis has become more expensive than that which prevailed in the good old days, partly from a vain desire to make an ambitious display of wealth, and partly from the unprecedentedly rapid increase of the population, which has, as a necessary consequence, considerably raised the prices of all kinds of provisions, an entertainment of this nature costs from four to five hundred rupees on each side. The very best kinds of *luchis*, *kachuris*, vegetable curries, fruits, sweetmeats* and other delicacies of the season have to be provided for this special occasion.

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* The Bengalis have become so much anglicised of late that they have not hesitated to give an English name to their sweetmeats. When the late Lord Canning was the Governor-General of India, it was said, his Babu made a present of some native sweetmeats to Lady Canning, who was kindly pleased to accept them. Hence that sweetmeat is called the "Lady Canning," and to this day no grand feast among the Bengalis is considered complete unless the "Lady Canning" sort is offered to the guests. The man that first made it is said to have gained much money by its sale. It is not the savoury taste of the thing that makes it so popular, but the name of the illustrious Lady. While treating of the subject of Hindoo entertainments, it would not be out of place to make a few observations on one branch of it, for the information of European readers. At all public entertainments of the kind I am referring to, respectable Hindoos strictly confine themselves to *vegetable curries*. Though those of the *Sákta* denomination (the followers of Kali and Durgá) have no reli

English friends are often invited to the marriages of rich families in Calcutta, and regaled with all sorts of delicacies from the Great Eastern Hotel. The family mansion is splendidly furnished and brilliantly illuminated. There is a profusion of pictures and chandeliers. All the furniture and surroundings are indicative rather of an English than of a Native house. Dancing girls are hired to impart *eclât* to the scene. A *nahabat*, covered with tinsel, is put up in front of the house, where native musicians play at intervals, much to the satisfaction of the mother of the bridegroom and the boys of the neighbourhood; and a temporary crescent-shaped scaffolding made of bamboos and ornamental paper, is erected on the highway, bearing on it the inscription, "God save the bridegroom." Male and female servants receive presents of gold and silver bangles and move about the house gaily dressed in red. As tangible memorials of the happy union, presents of large brass pots, with oil, plates with sweetmeats, fruits, and clothes, &c., are largely distributed among the Bráhmans, and the friends and relatives of the family. This present is called *Samájik*. With the exception of Bráhmans, who are content with returning hollow benedictions, in which the sacerdotal class, as a rule, are so very liberal, every-one else who receives a present makes in return presents of clothes and sweetmeats, the nearest relatives giving the most costly. In times of great *lagansha*,—*i.e.*, in the height of the marriage season, — the demand for clothes and sweetmeats is

gious scruples against using goat-meat (male) and onions in the shape of curry, among select friends at home, yet they dare not expose themselves by offering it to strangers. Hence, in large assemblies, they strictly confine themselves to vegetable curries of different kinds. The principle is good, were it honestly observed; because meat, if not necessarily, yet generally, is the concomitant of *drink*. *Privately*, however, both meat and drink are largely used. Respectable females are entirely free as yet from these carnal indulgences.

really enormous. Dealers in those things make a harvest of profit and "the town becomes a jubilee of feasts."

During the night preceding the marriage, the women both the families scarcely sleep, being busily engaged in making all sorts of preparations for the next day. Very early in the morning, five *Ayows*, or women whose husbands are alive, take with them a light, a knife, a *Sree*, a *Barandálá*, containing sundry little articles described before, a small brass pot, some sweetmeats, *chirá* and *murki*, oil, betel, betel-nuts and turmeric, and go to the nearest tank, sounding a conch, and touching the water with the knife, fill the brass pot with water. The above articles having been presented as an offering to the brass pot, the females receive a portion of the eatables and return home still sounding the conch, which is a necessary accompaniment of all religious ceremonies.

What I am now about to describe may be called the *first* marriage, because it is invariably followed by a second ceremonial when the union is really consummated. But it properly forms the binding ceremony, as constituting the marriage relation between the two youthful parties, with all its legal and social rights, even if they should not be spared to live together as husband and wife. The emptiness and superficiality of the relation, especially on the side of the childish bride, will be but too apparent; and it but too often results, in this uncertain life, in the prolonged misery of a virgin widowhood.

On the day of the marriage both the bridegroom and the bride are forbidden to eat anything except a little milk and a little fruit. The father of the bride also fasts, as well as the officiating priests of the two families. About twelve o'clock in the day, the Maulik family sends presents of clothes, sweetmeats, fish, sour and sweet milk, and some money, say about twenty-five rupees, to the house of the Kulin family, as a mark of honor to the latter, due to his superior caste. This present is called *Adhibássy*. Both the fathers are also

required, during the day, to perform the ceremony of *Nánní-muka*, or *Biddhi-shrádha*,—a ceremony, the meaning of which, as said before, is to make offerings to the manes of ancestors, and to secure the increase and preservation of progeny.

After the performance of these ceremonies, both the bridegroom and the bride put on a new red-bordered *dhuti* and *sári* respectively at their several houses, and are made to bathe; and five women whose husbands are alive touch their foreheads with sundry little things, as mentioned before. They afterwards go through a few minor rites, which are purely the inventions of the women, not being at all enjoined in the *Shástras*. It is obvious that the primary object of all these female rites is to promote conjugal felicity. Strange as it may appear, the mother of the bridegroom eats *seven* times (of course but little at a time) that day through a fear lest the bride, when she comes home, will give her but scanty meals,* while the mother of the bride does not eat anything until the marriage ceremony is over, being impressed with a notion that the more she fasts then the more she will get to eat afterwards.

The females on the side of the bride, with the help of a matron, exercise their utmost ingenuity, and rack their brains, in devising all manner of contrivances partaking of the character of charms to win the devoted attachment of the bride-groom towards the lovely little bride. They resort to many petty tricks for the purpose which are too absurd and childish to be dwelt upon. Credulous as they naturally are, not to speak of the normal weakness of their intellect, they fondly

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* The cause of the fear is as follows: When Kártik (the god of beauty and the son of the goddess Durgá) went out to marry, he forgot to take with him the usual pair of nut-crackers. When he remembered this on the way, he immediately returned home, and to his great surprise saw his mother eating with her ten hands. On asking the reason, he was told that it was lest, when he should bring his wife, she should not give her the proper quantity of food.

imagine that their *thuk-thak*, or trick, is sure to triumph and produce the desired effect. To give an instance or two. They write down in red ink on the back of the *Piray*, or wooden seat on which the bride is to sit, the names of twenty-one uxorious husbands, and go round the bride seven times. They also write the name of the goddess Durgá, on the silk *sári* or garment which the bride is to wear at the marriage ceremony, because Shiva, her husband, was excessively fond of her. They place before her the *Chandi-Puthi*, a sacred book treating of Durgá and Shiva, while her mouth is filled with two betel-nuts to be afterwards chewed unawares with betel by the bridegroom. Meantime active preparations are made on both sides for the auspicious solemnization of the nuptials. At the house of the bridegroom, arrangements are made for illumination and fireworks, and the grand *Nágárás* announce the approaching departure of the procession. Imitations of mountains and peacocks are made of colored paper, spacious enough to accommodate a dozen persons; hundreds of *khás-gaylap* and silver staves are seen on the roadside; groups of singers and musicians are posted here and there to give specimens of the vulgar songs of the populace; a *Sukásan*, or bridegroom's seat, elegantly fitted up, is brought out with two boys gaily dressed to fan the bridegroom with *chámars*;* hundreds of blue and red lights are distributed among the swarthy coolies, who are to use them on the road when the procession moves. The bridegroom, after washing, is helped to put on a suit of superbly embroidered Benares *kinkab* clothes with a pearl necklace of great value, besides bangles and armlets set with precious stones, and garlands of flowers. Darwans and guards of honor are paraded in front of the house; and in short, nothing is omitted to render the scene imposing. As has been already observed, there is a growing desire among the Hindoos to imitate English manners and

* The *chámars* are fans made of the tails of Thibet cows.

fashions. A marriage procession is considered quite incomplete, unless bands of English musicians are retained; and a cavalcade of troopers, like a burlesque of the Governor-General's Body Guard, is seen to move forward to clear the way. A Cook's carriage with a postillion is not unfrequently observed to suspersede the old *Sukásan* or gilt Pálki.

Before the bridegroom leaves home he says his prayers to the goddess Durgá, and makes his preparatory *játtrá* (departure). At this time his mother asks him, "*Bábá*, where are you going?" He answers, "To bring in your *Dásí*, or maid-servant." Before leaving he receives from her a few instructions as to how he should conduct himself at the house of his father-in-law. He is to gaze on the stars in heaven, to keep his feet half on the ground and half on the wooden seat when engaged in performing any ceremony, and not to use any other betel than his own. The object of these instructions is to thwart the intention of his mother-in-law to make him an uxorious husband,—a wish in which his mother does not share at all, because it is calculated to diminish his regard for her. In the majority of cases the wish of the mother-in-law prevails over that of the mother, as is quite natural.

He has next to perform the rite of *Kanakanjuli*, surrounded by all the women of the family. A small brass plate containing rice, a small wooden pot of vermilion, and one rupee, are thrown right over his head by his father into the *sári*, or robe of his mother, who stands behind him for the purpose of receiving the same. This is the signal for him to come out, and if all arrangements are complete, take his seat in the bridal *sukásan*, or carriage. The procession moves forward amid the increasing darkness. One or two European constables march ahead. The usual cortège of stalwart darwans follow. The torches and flambeaus are lighted. The *Khásgaylapwállas* are ranged on both sides of the road; in the midst are placed bands of English and native musicians. Parties of singers in female dress begin

to sing and dance on the *Maurpankhi*, borne on the shoulders of coolies. The flaring torches are waved around the procession. Blue and red lights are flashed at intervals. Noise, confusion, and bustle ensue. Men, women, and children all flock to see the támásá. Mischievous boys try to steal the lights. And, to lend enchantment to the scene, gay Babus in open carriages, in their gala dresses, bring up the rear. It is on such occasions that modest beauties and newly-married brides (*baus*) come out of the zenana, and, unveiling their faces, stand on the tops of their houses on both sides of the road, in order to feast their eyes on all the pompous accompaniments of a marriage procession. As soon as the procession arrives near the house of the bride, the people of the neighbourhood assemble in groups to have a sight of the lord of the day; and four or five gentlemen of the bride's party advance to welcome the bridegroom and his friends, who enter amid the stares of the idle and the salutations of the polite. The barber of the family brings out a light in a *sará* (earthen vessel) and places it on the side of the road.

As the initiatory rite of the auspicious event, the females blow the conch-shell in the inner apartment, and some more impatient than the rest peep through the latticed corridor or window, while the bridegroom is slowly conducted to his appropriate seat of red satin with embroidered fringes, having three pillows of the same stuff on three sides. An awning is suspended over the spacious court, which is splendidly illuminated with gas lights. Polite and complimentary good wishes according to refined native etiquette are exchanged on both sides, comparing favorably with the rude manners of past times. "Come in, come in, gentlemen, and sit down, please," is the general cry. "Bring tobacco, bring tobacco, for both Bráhmans and Sudras," is the next welcome expression. Boys, especially the brother-in-law of the bridegroom, now bring him a couple of betel-nuts, to be cut with the pair of nut-crackers he holds in his hand. He objects and hesitates at first, but no excuse is

admitted, no plea heard, he must cut them in the best way he can.* When all the guests are properly seated, numbers of school-boys sit face to face and begin to wrangle, much to the amusement of the assemblage. As English education is now all the 'go' among the people, questions in spelling, grammar, geography and history, are put to each other. The following may be taken as a specimen: Ashutash asks Bholanath, "In what school do you read?" Bholanath answers, "In the Hare School." A. continues, "What books do you read?" B. enumerates them. A. asks, "What is your pedagogue's name?" B., a little confounded, remains quiet, meditating within himself what could a *pedagogue* mean. A. drawing nearer, asks him to spell the word, housewife? B. answers, "h-u-z-z-i-f." A. laughs heartily, in which he is joined by other boys. Continuing the chain of interrogations, he asks B. to parse the sentence: "To be good is to be happy." B. hanging down his head, attempts, but fails. "Where is Dundee, and what is it famous for?" B. answers, "Dundee is in Germany." (laughter). A. pressing his adversary, continues "What was the cause of the Trojan war?" B. answers hesitatingly, "The golden fleece!" Thus discomfited, B. takes refuge in ignoble silence, while A., in a triumphant mood, moves prominently forward amidst the plaudits of the assembled multitude. "Long live Ashutash," is the universal blessing.

Here two or three professional genealogists, wearing tunics and turbans, stand up, and in measured rhyme recite the

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* Even the minutest thing in the domestic economy of a Hindoo family is fraught with meaning: the nuts are kept all-day in the bride's mouth and are saturated with her saliva. When cut by the hand of the bridegroom they are supposed to possess a peculiar virtue. Somehow or other, the bridegroom must be made to use them in spite of the warning of his mother, forbidding him to use them on any account. When used, his love for his wife is supposed to be intensified, which is prejudicial to the interests of his mother.

genealogical table of the two families now affianced, blazoning forth the meritorious deeds of each succeeding generation. They keep a regular register of all the aristocratic Hindoo families, especially of the Kulin class, and at respectable marriages they are richly rewarded. It is quite amusing to hear how seriously they rehearse the virtuous acts of the ancestors, carefully refraining from making any allusion to disreputable acts of any kind. Though not equal to Chundá, the inimitable bard and pole-star of Rájasthán, as Colonel Tod calls him, their services are duly appreciated by all orthodox Hindoos, who exult in the glowing recital of ancestral deeds. Their language is so guarded and flattering that it can offend nobody, except such as do not reward them. Having the genealogical table in their possession they can easily turn the good into bad, and *vice versâ*, to serve their own selfish ends. An upstart, or one who has a family stain, pays them liberally to have his name inserted in the genealogical register, and to be mentioned in laudatory terms.

In the *Thákurdálán*, or chamber of worship, all preparations for the solemnization of the nuptials are now made. The couch-cot, bedding, carpet, embroidered and wooden shoes—here English shoes will not do—gold watch and chain, diamond ring, pearl necklace, and one set of silver and one set of brass untensils,* are arranged in proper order; and flowers, sandal-paste, durva grass, holy water in copper pans, and kusa grass, are placed before the priests of both parties. The bridegroom, laying aside his embroidered robe, is dressed in a red silk cloth, and taken to the place of worship, where the bride, also attired in a silk *sári*, veiled and trembling with fear, is slowly brought from the female penetralia on a wooden seat borne by two servants, and placed on the left side of the bridegroom.

* The articles consist of silver Ghará, Gáru, Báthá, Thállá, Báti, Glass, Raykáb, Dábar, Dipay and Pikdán.

Her agitation when brought before the altar of Hymen is greatly soothed by the wealth of gold ornaments—the *summum bonum* of her existence—with which her person is adorned. The officiating priest puts into the hands of the bridegroom fourteen blades of kusa grass in two small bundles, which he winds and ties round his figures. The priest then pours a little holy Ganges water into the bridegroom's right hand, which he holds while the father-in-law repeats a *mantra*, or incantation, at the close of which he lets it fall. Rice, flowers, and durva grass are next given him, which he lays near the copper pan containing the holy water. Water is presented as at first with a prayer, then sour milk, then again water. The officiating priest now directs him to put his hand into the copper pan, and placing the hand of the bride on that of the bridegroom ties them together with a garland of flowers, when the father-in-law says: "Of the family of Gautama, the great grand-daughter of Rám Charan Basu, the grand-daughter of Ballorám Basu, the daughter of Rámsunder Basu, wearing such and such clothes and jewels, I, Dwariká-náth Basu, give to thee, Omá Charan Datta, of the family of Bharaddáz, the great grandson of Dinanáth Datta, the grandson of Shib Charan Datta, the son of Jadunáth Datta." The bridegroom says, "I have received her." The father-in-law then takes off the garland of flowers with which the hands of the married pair were bound, and pouring some holy water on their heads, pronounces his benediction. A piece of silk cloth, called *Lajjá-bastra*, is then put over the heads of the boy and girl, and they are asked to look at each other *for the first time in their lives.* While the marriage ceremony is being performed, the boy is made to wear on his head a conical tinsel hat. Here the barber of the bridegroom gives to the priest a little *khai* (parched rice) and a little ghee, which are offered with durva grass to the god Brahmá. A very small piece of coarse cloth called *gantchhárá*, or knotted cloth, containing in all twenty-one myrobalans, *boyrá* fruit

and betel-nuts, is tied to the silk *dhobjá*, or scarf, of the bridegroom, which is fastened again to the silk garment of the bride, thus symbolising a union never to be severed. The married couple are then taken into the inner court, where the women are waiting on the tiptoe of expectation, clasped for a moment in a rapturous embrace. As soon as the boy appears, or rather before his appearance, conch-shells are again blown, and he is made to stand on a stone placed under a small awning called *chhádláhtalah*, a temporary shed, surrounded on four sides by plantain trees. By way of merriment, some women greet him with *haye-amla* mixed in treacle, some pull his ears, notably his sisters-in-law, while matrons cry out "*ulu, ulu, ulu,*" sounds indicative of excessive joy. It would require the masterly pen of a Sir Walter Scott to adequately delineate the joyous feelings of the women on such an auspicious occasion.

The bridegroom is made to wear on his ten fingers ten rings made of twigs of creepers, and his hands are tied by a piece of thread as long as his body. Putting betwixt them a weaver's shuttle, the mother-in-law says, — "I have bound thee by thread, bought thee with cowries, and put a shuttle betwixt thy hands, now bleat thou like a lamb,* Bápu,"—a term of endearment. She also closes his mouth by touching his lips with a padlock, symbolically fastening the same with twenty-one pins, that he may never scold the girl; touches his nose with a slender bamboo pipe and breaks it after-

* I have known a young collegian of a rather humourous disposition really bleat like a lamb at the marriage, to the great amusement of all the women except his mother-in-law, who, simple as she was, took the matter in a serious light, and became quite dejected on account of the great stupidity of her son-in-law (for she could not take it in any other sense); but her dejection gave place to joy when in the *Básarghar*—the sleeping room of the happy pair for the night —she heard him outwit all the women present. It is obvious that the meaning of this part of the female rite is to render the husband tame and docile as a lamb, especially in his treatment of his wife.

wards, throws over his body treacle and rice, as well as the refuse of spices pounded on a grindstone, which has been kept covered in a bag for eight days, by two women whose husbands are alive, and finally touches his lips with honey and small images made of sugar, that he may ever treat his wife like a *sweet* darling.

Afterwards the mother-in-law, with several other married women adorned with all their costly ornaments and dressed in their best attire, touches his forehead with *Sri*, *Barandálá*, a winnowing fan, plantain, betel and betel-nuts; and here the silk scarf of the boy, of which mention has been made before, is again more closely fastened to the silk garment of the girl, and remains with her for eight days, after which it is returned, accompanied by presents of sweetmeats, fish and curdled milk. These puerile rites, purely the invention of the women, are intended to act as charms for securing the love and affection of the husband for his wife. The wish is certainly a good one, but often the agencies employed fail to produce the desired effect. "Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul." Before the marriage ceremony is concluded, the boys of the neighbourhood make the usual demand of *Grámvati* and *Bárwári-pujá*. At first, in a polite way, they ask the father of the bridegroom for the gift. He offers an amount, but they insist on having more. After some altercation, in which sometimes high words and offensive language are made use of,* the matter is eventually settled on payment

* In former days unpleasant quarrels were known to have arisen between the two parties from very trivial circumstances. The friends of the bridegroom often pluming themselves on their special prerogatives as members of the stronger party, readily resented even the slightest insult offered to them unintentionally by the bride's party. These altercations sometimes terminated in blows, if not in lacerated limbs. Instead of waiting till the conclusion of the ceremony, the whole of the bridegroom's party has been known to return home without dinner, to the great mortification of the other party. There

of a reasonable sum. This money is used in giving a feast to the boys of the neighbourhood, reserving a portion for the *Bárwári-pujá*,—a mode of worship which will be described in another place.

As an epilogue to the nuptial rite, the bridegroom continues to stand on a stone, while two men setting the bride on a wooden seat, and lifting her higher than his head, make three circumambulations, asking the females at the same time which is taller, the bridegroom or the bride? The stereotyped response is, "the bride." This being done, the women throwing a piece of cloth over the heads of both, desire them to glance at each other with all the fond endearments of a wedded pair. As is to be expected, the coy girl, almost in a state of trepidation, casts but a transient look, and veils her face instantly; but the boy, young as he is, feels delight in viewing the lovely face of his future wife. This look is called *Shuvadristi*, or "the auspicious sight," a harbinger of future felicity.

The bridegroom returns to the *Táhkurdálán* or place of worship, and performs the concluding part of marriage ceremony, while the officiating priest, repeating the usual incantation, presents the burnt offerings (*homa*) to the gods, which terminates the religious part of the rite.* But before the

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is a common saying among the Bengalis that "he who is the enemy of the house should go to a marriage party." It used to be a common sport with the friends of the bridegroom to cut with a pair of scissors the bedding at the house of the bride. But happily such practices are of rare occurrence now.

* An English gentleman, familiarly acquainted with the manners and customs of the country, once advised a Native friend of his to go to England with a number of Hindoo females and exhibit there all the important social and domestic ceremonials of this country in a place of public resort. The very circumstances of Hindoo females performing those rites in the manner in which they are popularly

bridegroom leaves the place of worship, the officiating priests of both sides must have their *dakshiná*, or pecuniary reward. If the boy be of the Maulik caste, and the girl of the Kulin caste, the former must give double what the latter gives, *i. e.*, 16 rupees and 8 rupees. Here, as in every other instance, the superiority of caste asserts its peculiar privileges. The professional genealogists, after concluding their recitation and singing their epithalamiums, also come in for their share of the reward, but they are generally told to wait till the next day, when, in common with other *Ghataks*, they receive their recompense. The bridegroom is then permitted to have a little breathing time, after the infliction of so many religious and domestic rites, which latter formed the special province of the women.

The head of the family now stands up before the assembly, and asks their permission to go through the ceremony of *Málá-Chandan*, or the distribution of sandaled garlands. This is done to pay them the honor due to their rank. The *Dalapati*, or the head of the order or party, almost invariably receives the first garland, and then the assembled multitudes are served. For securing this hereditary distinction to a family, large sums of money have been spent from time to time by millionaires who had risen from an obscure position in life to a state of great affluence. The late Rájá Rájkrishna Bahadur, Babus Rám Dulál Dey, Krishna Rám Basu, Madan Mohan Datta, Sánti Rám Singhi, Rám Ratan Rai and others, expended upwards of a lakh of rupees, or £10,000 each, for the possession of the enviable title of *Dalapati*, or head of a party. The way by which this noble distinction was secured was to induce first-class Kulins, by sufficient pecuniary

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celebrated here, would be sure to attract a very large audience. The marriage ceremonies alone would form a regular night of enchantment. The time will certainly come when the realization of such an ingenious idea will no longer be held Utopian.

inducements, to intermarry into the family of the would-be *Dalapati*. The generally impoverished condition of the old aristocracy of the land, and the onward march of intellect teaching the people to look to sterling merit for superiority in the scale of society, have considerably deteriorated the value of these artificial distinctions. The progress of education has opened a new era in the social institutions of the country, and an enlightened man of low caste is now-a-days more esteemed than an empty-titled *Dalapati*, whose social status is not to be estimated by the numbers of Kulins he is connected with, but by the extent and character of his services to society.

The bridegroom next dines with his friends outside, notwithstanding the importunities of the women for him to dine in their presence in the inner apartment, that they may have an opportunity to indulge in merriment at his expense. As a rule, the Bráhmans dine first, and then the numerous guests and attendants, numbering sometimes one thousand. Despite the efforts of the friends of the bride to prevent unwelcome intrusion, from a natural apprehension of running short of supplies, which, on such occasions, are procured at enormous cost, many uninvited persons, in the disguise of respectable looking Babus, contrive somehow or other to mingle in the crowd, and behave with such propriety as to elude detection. The proportion of male intruders is larger than that of females, simply because the latter, however barefaced, cannot entirely divest themselves of all modesty. It would not be above the mark to put down the number of the former at twenty per cent. Such men are professional intruders; they are entirely devoid of self-respect, and lead a wretched, demoralized life. Foreigners can have no idea of the extent to which they carry on their disreputable trade, including in their ranks some of the highest Bráhmans of the country. It is not an uncommon sight, on such occasion, to behold numbers of people after dinner carrying off bundles of *luchis* (fine edibles) and sweet-

meats in their hands, which *methranis** threaten to touch and defile.

When full justice has been done to the feast provided for the occasion, the crowd melts away and streams out at the door, well pleased with the reception they have had. It is much easier to satisfy men than women in this respect. The latter are naturally fastidious, and the least shortcoming is sure to be found fault with. When confusion and bustle have subsided, the bridegroom is slowly conducted into a room in the inner apartment, which bears the euphonious name of *Básarghar*, the bed-chamber of the happy pair, or rather the store-house of jokes and banter, where are met his wife, his mother-in-law,† and the whole galaxy of beauty. The very name of *Básarghar*‡

* Women of the sweeper-caste.

† According to the rules of Hindoo society, a mother-in-law is not permitted to appear before her son-in-law; it is considered not only indecorous but scandalous; hence she always keeps her distance from her son-in-law, but on this particular night, her presence in the room with other women is quite consistent with feminine propriety. In the case of a very young son-in-law, however, a departure from this rule is not reprehensible.

‡ In the suburbs of Calcutta and rural districts of Bengal, females, more particularly among the Bráhman class, are allowed to have great liberty on this special occasion. Laying aside their instinctive modesty, they entertain the bridegroom not only with epithalamiums but with other amorous songs, having reference to the diversions of Krishna with his mistress, and the numerous milkmaids. Under an erroneous impression that they are singing holy songs, they unwittingly trumpet the profligate character of their god. These songs are generally known by the names of *sakhisangbád* and *biraha;* the former consist of news conveyed by the principal milkmaids regarding his mistress, to whom he oftentimes proved false, and the latter of disappointed love, broadly exhibiting the prominent features of his sensuous life. Frail as women naturally are, the example of such a god, combined with the sanction of religion, has undoubtedly a tendency to impair their virtue. To strike a death-blow at the root of the evil must be the work of time. The essential elements of the Hindoo character must be thoroughly recast.

suggests to a female a variety of ideas at once amusing and fascinating. Nursed from her cradle in a state of perfect seclusion, and immersed in all the drudgeries of a monotonous domestic life, she is glad of any opportunity to share in the unrestrained pleasure of joviality. The mother-in-law, throwing aside conventional restraint, introduces herself, or is introduced by other women, to her son-in-law. They pull the poor lad's ears, in spite of his earnest protestations, and if they do not know what flirtation is, they assail him with jokes which quite puzzle him and bewilder his senses. They burst into roars of laughter and make themselves merry at his expense; he feels himself almost helpless and unprepared to make a suitable repartee, and is at length driven into all manner of excuses for a brief respite and a short repose. He complains of headache occasioned by the lateness of the hour; as a sure remedy they give him soda, ice, eau-de-cologne and almost bathe him in rose-water; but a soporific they can on no account allow him, because it would mar their pleasure and sink their lively spirits. Keeping up their jokes, they place the lovely bride with all her gold trappings on his knee, and unveiling her face ask him to look at it, and say whether or not he likes her; she closes her eyes, struggles to have the veil dropped down, but her sisters do not yield to her wish, and keeping her yet unveiled, repeat the question. Of course he makes no reply, but blushes and hangs down his head; their demand being imperative, he sees no other alternative, but to reply gently in the affirmative. They next make the girl bride, much against her inclination, lie down by his side; as often as she is dragged so often she draws back, but yielding at last to the admonition of her mother, she is constrained to lie down, because, on that night, this form is strictly enjoined in the female shástra. The innocent girl, not participating in the absurd mirth but shrinking within herself, turns away, and with an occasional whimper passes the sleepless, miserable hours. The dawn of morning is to her most welcome, although it affords

her but a temporary relief. As the first glimpse of light is perceived, she flies into the bosom of her aunt, who tries to animate her drooping spirit by a word or two of solace, citing perhaps at the same time the example of Sarojiní, her elder sister, placed in a similar position three years ago. The women referred to remain all night in the *Básarghar.* As a matter of course, aged women go to sleep faster than young sprightly girls of sweet seventeen, who are bent on making the best of the occasion by indulging in tricks and witticisms. They literally rack their brains to outwit the bridegroom by their *tháttá* and *támáshá* (jokes), and their stock seems to be almost inexhaustible. They contrive to make him chew the beera or betel which was *first* chewed by the bride, and if he be obstinate enough to refuse in obedience to the warning of his mother, which is often the case, four or five young ladies open his lips, and thrust the chewed betel into his mouth. What young man would be so ungallant as to resist them after all that? He must either submit, or bear the opprobrium of a foolish discourteous boy. Thus the whole night is passed in the banter and practical joking peculiar to Hindoo women. When in the morning he attempts to get away from their company, one or two ladies, notably his *sális,* or sisters-in-law, hold him fast by the skirt of his silk garment, demanding the customary present of *Sarjyátoláni.** He sends a message to his man outside, and gets a sum of money, generally from 30 to 50 rupees, on payment of which they permit him to go. After a short respite he is again brought into the inner apartment, and after shaving, bathing and changing his clothes, he is made to go through almost the same course of female rites as on the preceding night, with this difference only, that no officiating priest

* The fee for the trouble of removing the bed and keeping up all night. The ladies who remained in the bed-chamber are justly entitled to it for their pains. A widow, be it observed, is not permitted to touch the bed lest her misfortune should befall the bride; but she gets her share of the fee.

is required to help. This rite is named *Bássí Bibáha* (not new marriage), all the ceremonials being conducted by the females. It would be tedious to inflict on the reader a recapitulation of the same; suffice it to say, that in them all one grand idea is plainly perceptible, namely, the long life and conjugal felicity of the happy pair. In the opinion of the Hindoo women, the greater the number of matrimonial ceremonies, the greater the chance of securing the favor of Hymen. At the conclusion, the boy and girl are directed to say that they have passed the state of celibacy and entered on that of matrimony.

As morning advances, the bridegroom walking, and the bride in the arms of her relative, are next brought into a room—the women blowing the conch and sprinkling water,—and made to sit near each other. They then play with cowries (shells); the girl is told to take up *a few* cowries in her left hand and put them near the boy, while on the other hand the boy is told to take up as *much* as his right hand can contain and put them before the girl, the meaning of which is, that the girl should spend sparingly and the boy should give her abundantly. They then play with four very small earthen pots, called *moonglivár*, filled with rice and peas; the girl first opens the lids of the pots and throws the contents on a *Kulo* (winnowing fan), the boy takes it up and fills the pots, the girl slowly puts on the lids, and inaudibly repeats the name of her husband for the first time,* expressing a hope that by the above process she may stop his mouth and curb his tongue that he may never abuse her. As the first course of breakfast, fruits and sweetmeats are served to the bridegroom and the bride. He eats a little and is requested to offer a portion of

* It should be mentioned that, after her marriage, a female is not allowed to utter the name of her husband or of any of his male and female relatives, save those who are younger than herself. There is no harm done in pronouncing the name of her husband, but through a sense of shame she does not repeat it.

the same to his wife, whose modesty forbids her to accept any in his presence; but the earnest importunities of the nearest of kin overcome her shyness, and she is at length prevailed upon to taste a little which is offered her by the hand of her husband, the women expressing a desire at the same time that she may continue to eat from the same hand to the end of her days. They then receive the benedictions of the male and female members of the family in money, durva grass, and paddy, which embody a prayer to God for their everlasting happiness. A second course of breakfast, consisting of boiled rice, dál, fish and vegetable curries in great variety, sweetmeats, sour and sweet milk, is next brought for the bridegroom; seeing that he eats very slowly and sparingly through shame, his sisters-in-law help him with handfuls of rice and curries, &c. After he has finished eating, the remainder of the food is given to his wife in a separate room, because it is customary that she should eat the same food that day, with a view to cement their mutual love and affection.

Preparations are now made for the return of the procession to the house of the bridegroom, but before it starts some pecuniary matters are to be settled. The father of the bridegroom gives fifty rupees as *Sarjyátolani*, for the benefit of the sisters of the bride; and the father of the bride must give the same sum, if not a larger one, as *Nanadkhaymee*, for the benefit of the sisters of the bridegroom. Then the difficult problem of *Samájik* is to be solved. In almost every case, the question is not decided without some discussion. Hindoos are above all tenacious of caste when the question is one of rupees and pice. Crowds of *Bháts, fakirs, nágás, raywas,* and mendicants shouting at times "*Jai, Jai,*" victory, victory; "*Bar konay bachay thakoog,*" "may the bridegroom and bride live long," impatiently wait in the street for their usual alms. They get a few annas each and disperse. Professional *Ghataks,* genealogists, and Bráhmans also come in for their share, and are not disappointed. Then comes the interesting and affecting

part of the ceremonial, the *játtrá*, or the approaching departure of the happy pair for the house of the bridegroom. A small brass pot filled with holy water and a small wooden pot of vermilion being placed before them, they are made to sit on the two wooden *pirays* on which they sat the previous evening at the marriage, and the women touch their foreheads with sour milk, *shiddi* (hemp), and the consecrated *arghi* of the goddess Durgá,* which latter is left in a tuft on the *Khopá*, or ringlet, of the bride's hair for eight days. Her forehead is also rubbed with vermilion, the mark of a woman whose husband is alive. This is followed by the rite of *Kanokánjuli* already described; but this time the father of the bride throws the brass plate right over her head into the lap of his wife, who stands for the purpose behind her daughter. A sudden and solemn pause is perceptible here, betokening the subsidence of joy and the advent of sorrow. In the midst of the company, mostly women, the father and mother of the bride, alternately clasping both the hands of the bridegroom, with tears in their eyes, commit the very responsible trust of the young wife to his charge, saying at the same time in a faltering tone, "hitherto our daughter was placed under our care, but now through the *Bhabitarbi*, or kind dispensation of Providence, she is consigned for ever to your charge; may you kindly overlook her shortcomings and frailties, and prove your fidelity by constancy." At this parting expression, tears start into the eyes of all the females, naturally more susceptible than the sterner sex. With sorrowful countenances and deep emotion they look steadfastly at the married pair, and imploringly beseech the bridegroom to treat the bride with all the tenderness of an affectionate husband. The scene is

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* The *arghi* consists of *durva* grass, rice and *áltá* (a thin red stuff made of cotton, like paper, with which Hindoo females daub their feet.) previously consecrated to the goddess Durgá, and is supposed to possess a peculiar virtue in promoting felicity and relieving distress.

exceedingly affecting, and the sweet sorrow of parting does not permit them to say *Bidâya*, or farewell, to the bridegroom. The mother-in-law, especially, should the bride be her only daughter, is overwhelmed with grief, and if she does not cry bitterly, her suppressed emotion is unmistakable; the idea even of a temporary separation is enough to break her heart, and no consolation can restore the natural serenity of her mind.* Her relatives endeavour to cheer her by reminding her of their and her own cases, and declare that all women are born to share the same fate. They scarcely enter the world before they

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* Hindoos are so passionately fond of their children, male or female, that they can but ill brook the idea of separation, even under circumstances where it is unavoidable. Hence wealthy families often keep their sons-in-law under their own roof. Sometimes this is done from vanity. Such sons-in-law generally become indolent and effeminate, destitute alike of mental activity and physical energy. They eat, drink, smoke, play and sleep. Fattening on the ample resources of their father-in-law, they contract demoralizing habits, which engender vice and profligacy. The late Babus Rámdulál Dey, Rámrattan Rai, Plánnáth Chaudhri, the Tagore families, the old Rájás of Calcutta and some of the newly fledged English-made Rájás and others, countenanced this practice, and the result is, they have left with but few exceptions a number of men singularly deficient in good moral character. These men are called *Ghar-Jamayes*, or home-bred sons-in-law, which is a term of reproach among all who have a spark of independence about them. The late Babu Dina Bandhu Mittra, the celebrated author of "*Nil Darpan*," strongly satirizes such characters in a book called "*Jamaye Bareek*." While on this subject, I may as well mention here that Babu Rámdulál Dey of Calcutta, who had risen from obscurity to great opulence, had five daughters, to each of whom he gave a marriage dowry of Rupees 50,000 in Government securities, and 10,000 rupees for a house. Of course all his sons-in-law were first class *Kulins*, and used to live under the roof of their father-in-law. Some of their sons and grandsons are now ranked amongst the Hindoo millionaires of this great City, while most of the members of the original stock have dwindled into insignificance, strikingly illustrating the instability of fortune.

must leave their parents and intermarry into other families. This is their destiny, and this the law of *jagat* (the world), and they must all abide by it. Instead of repining, she ought to pray to *Debtá* (god) "that her daughter should ever continue to live at her father-in-law's, use *Sindur* (vermilion) on her grey head, wear out her *iron bangle*, and be a *janma ayestrí*"—blessings which are all enjoyed by a female whose husband is alive. Such powerful arguments and undeniable examples partially restore the equanimity of her mind, and she is half persuaded to join her friends and go and see the procession from the top of the house. The same tumult and bustle which ensued at the arrival now prevail at the departure of the bridegroom in his *Sukásan*, and the bride in her closely covered crimson *Mahápáyá*, preceded by all the *tinsel trappings*, and bands of English and Native musicians. The procession moves slowly forwards with all the pomp and circumstance of a grand, imposing exhibition, amidst the staring of the wondering populace. "It is on such occasions," as Macaulay observes, "that tender and delicate women, whose veils had never been lifted before the public gaze, come forth from the inner chambers in which Eastern jealousy keeps watch over their beauty." The great body of *Barjattras*—bridegroom's friends—who graced the procession with their presence the previous night, do not accompany it now on its return homewards, and notwithstanding all the vigilance of the extra guards, the mob scrambles for and forcibly takes away the tinsel flower and fruit trees on the way. In an hour or two, all the objects of wonder vanish from the sight, and leave no mark behind: "the gaze of fools, the pageant of a day."

On the arrival of the procession at its destination, the bridegroom alights from the *Sukásan* and the bride from the *Mahápáyá*, under which, by way of welcome, is thrown a *ghará*, or pot of water. Hereupon the silk *chádar*, or scarf, of the bridegroom, so long in the possession of the bride, is entwined between both while the conch is blowing, and they

are taken into the inner apartment, the former walking, the latter in the arms of one of her nearest female relatives whose husband is alive. The boy is made to stand on an *álpaná piray* (white-painted wooden seat), the girl on a thálá or metal plate filled with milk and áltáwater, and holding in her hand a live *shole* fish. A small earthen pot of milk is put upon the fire by a female whose husband is alive, and when it boils over, the veil of the girl is lifted, and she is desired to look at the overflowing process and say gently three times "so may the wealth and resources of my father-in-law overflow," while her mother-in-law puts round her left hand an iron bangle,* and, with the usual benediction that she may be ever blessed with her husband, rubs the middle of her forehead with a little vermilion. A small basket of paddy, or unhusked rice, upon which stands a small pot of vermilion, is placed on the head of the bride, which the bridegroom supports with his left hand; and when they have both been greeted three times with the *Srí*, *Barandálá*, *Kulo*, water, plantain, betel-nuts, as has been described before, by the bridgroom's mother, he, with his pair of nut-crackers in his right hand, throws over the ground a few grains of paddy from the *rek*, walks slowly over a new piece of red-bordered cloth into a room, accompanied by his wife and preceded by other females, one of whom blows a conch and another sprinkles water,—both tokens of an auspicious event.

When all are properly seated upon bedding spread on the floor, the bridegroom and the bride play again the game of

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* The use of an iron bangle or bracelet has a deep meaning: it outlasts gold and silver ones. A girl may wear gold ornaments set in precious stones to the value of ten or fifteen thousand rupees; but an *iron* bangle worth only a pice,—a veritable mark of *ayestrihood* as opposed to widowhood—is indispensable to a married woman for its comparatively durable quality. A young widow may wear gold bangles till her twentieth year, but she is not privileged to put on an iron bangle after the death of her husband.

jatuk with cowries (shells)* as before. They afterwards receive the usual *assirbád* (blessing) in paddy, durva grass, and money. The mother-in-law, in order to ensure the permanent submissiveness of the bride, puts honey into her ears and sugar into her mouth, that she may receive her commands and execute them like a sweet obedient girl. Some women then place a male child on the thigh of the bridegroom, and desire him to hand it to the bride. According to prescribed custom, the mother-in-law, on first seeing the face of her daughter-in-law, presents her with a pair of gold bangles. Other near female relatives, following her example, present her severally with a pair of gold armlets, a pearl necklace, a set of gold *pitjhápá*, or an ornament for the back, jingling as the girl moves, a pair of diamond-cut gold earrings set in precious stones, and so on. To account for the common desire of the Hindoos to give a profusion of jewels to their females, Manu, their great law-giver, enjoins—"let women be constantly supplied with ornaments at festivals and jubilees, for if the wife be not elegantly attired, she will not gladden her husband. When a wife is gaily adorned, the whole house is embellished." She is next taken into the kitchen, where all sorts of cooked victuals, except meat, have been prepared in great abundance. She is desired to look at them, and pray to God that her father-in-law may always enjoy plenty. On her return from the cook-room, the bridegroom gives into her hands an embroidered Benares *sári*, as also a brass *thálá* (plate), with a

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* In the early part of the British Government in Bengal, *cowries* were the common currency of the Province in the ordinary transactions of life. People used to make their *hatbazar* (purchases) with *cowries*, and a family that made a daily bazar with sixteen or eighteen *kahans* of cowries, equal to one rupee or so, was reckoned a very respectable family. The prices of provisions ranged nearly one-third of what they now are. Even the revenues of Government were sometimes paid in cowries in the Eastern districts, namely, Assam, Sylhet, &c.

few *bátis* (cups) containing boiled rice, *dál*, and all the prepared curries, vegetables, and fish, frumenty, &c., and addresses her, declaring that from this day forward he undertakes to support her with food and clothes. He then partakes of the dinner and retires, while the bride is made to share the residue.* She is thus taught, from the moment of her union at the Hymeneal altar, her fundamental duty of absolute submission to, and utter dependence on, her husband.

Should she be of dark complexion and her features not beautiful, the bridegroom is thus twitted by his elder brothers' wives: "you all along disliked a black girl; now what will you do, *thákurpo?* Surely you cannot forsake her, we will see by-and-by you shall have to wash her feet." Words like these pierce the heart of the bridegroom, but politeness forbids him to reply. As regards the power of woman, the same law-giver says:—"A female is able to draw from the right path in this life not a fool only, but even a sage, and can lead him in subjection to desire or to wrath."

The nearest relatives and friends of the family are invited to partake of the *Bowbhát*, or bridal dinner, consisting of boiled rice, dál, fish and vegetable curries, frumenty, *polaos*, &c., served to the guests by the bride's own hands, which is tantamount to her recognition as one of the members of the family. To eat *anna* (boiled rice) is one thing, and to eat *jalpán* (luchis and sweetmeats) is quite another. A Hindoo can take the latter at the house of one of inferior caste, but he would lose his caste if he were to eat the former at the same place. Even among equals of the same caste, and much more among inferiors, boiled rice is not taken without mature consideration,

* A married woman considers it no disgrace, but rather an act of merit. to eat the remainder of her husband's meal in his absence: so great is the respect in which a husband is held, and so warm the sympathy existing between them. Even an elderly woman, the mother of five or six children, cheerfully partakes of the residue, as if it were the leavings of the gods.

and some sort of compensation from the inferior to the superior for condescending to eat the same. The compensation is made in money and clothes according to the rank of the *Kulins.* Before departing, the guests invited to the *Bowbhát*, at which they eat boiled *rice* from the hands of the bride, give her one, two, or more rupees each.

The day following is a very interesting day or rather night, being the night of *Fulsarjyá*,* or flowery bed. At about eight o'clock in the evening the father of the bride sends to his son-in-law ample presents of all sorts of fruits in or out of season, home and bazar made sweetmeats, some in the shape of men, women, fish, birds, carriages, horses, elephants, &c., &c., each weighing from 6 to 10 lbs., sweet and sour milk, (*bátásá*) a kind of sweet cakes, *chinir murki*, paddy,—fried and sugared comfits, spices of all sorts, betel and prepared betel-nuts, sets of ornaments and toys made of cutch, representing railway carriages, gardens, houses, dancing-girls, &c., imitation pearl necklaces made of rice, imitation gold necklaces made of paddy, colored imitation fruits made of curd†, butter, sugar, sugar-candy, *chháná* (coagulated milk), otto of roses, rose-water, chaplets of flowers and flower ornaments, in great variety, Dacca and embroidered Benares *dhuti* and *sárí*

* In contracting matrimonial alliances, some families placed in mediocre circumstances are satisfied with taking a certain sum of money in lieu of the presents mentioned above, partly because the articles are mostly of a perishable nature, and partly because the making presents of money to numerous servants for their trouble and feeding them, is regarded more as a tax than anything else. They prefer utility to show. Even in cases of verbal contract, the father of the bride must send at least thirty servants with presents, besides 100 or 150 rupees in cash as stipulated before.

† In making the above imitations, Hindoo females exhibit an astonishing degree of skill and ingenuity, which, if properly trained, would be capable of still further improvement. Naturally and instinctively, they evince a great aptitude for learning all sorts of handiwork.

for the boy and the girl, clothes for all the elderly females, couch-cot, bedding, sets of silver and brass utensils, carpets, embroidered shoes, gold watch and chain, &c., &c. Between 125 and 150 servants, male and female, carry these articles, some in banghies, some in baskets, and some in large brass *thálás*, or trays. These presents being properly arranged in the *Thákurdálán*, the male friends of the family are invited to come down and see them, some praising the choice assortment and large variety, as well as the taste of the father of the bride, while others more calculating make an estimate as to the probable cost of the whole. These articles are then removed into the inner apartment, where the females, naturally loquacious, criticise them according to their judgment; the simple and the good-natured say they are good and satisfactory, others more fastidious find fault with them. They are, however, soon silenced by the prudent remarks of the adult male members of the family. The servants are next fed and dismissed with presents of money, some receiving one rupee each, being the servants of the bride's family, some half a rupee, being the servants of other families. They then take back all the brass *thálás* and trays, leaving the baskets behind.

Here we come to the climax of interest. The bridegroom and the bride, adorned with a wealth of flower wreaths, and dressed in red-bordered Dacca clothes, with sandal paste on their foreheads, and sitting side by side in the presence of women whose husbands are alive, are desired to eat even a small portion of the articles of food that have been presented, and what is the most interesting feature in the scene is, that the former helps the latter and the latter helps the former, both throwing aside for the first time the restraint which modesty naturally imposes on such an occasion. To be more explicit, the boy eats one half of a sweetmeat and gives the other half to the girl, and the girl in her turn is constrained to do the same, though with a blushing countenance and a veiled face. If the boy gives blushingly, the girl gives shyly

and tremulously; in spite of her best efforts, she cannot make up her mind to lift up her right hand and stretch it towards the mouth of her husband, but has to be helped to do so by a woman, whose husband is alive. This eating* together and mutual helping, when three days have scarcely passed over their heads, naturally gives rise to joy, merriment and laughter among the women; and one amongst them exclaims; "look, look, *Saudaminí*, how our new *Rádhá* and *Krishna* are sitting side by side and eating together; may they live long and sport thus." The mother of the boy watches the progress of the interesting scene, and in transports of joy wishes for their continued felicity. The young and sprightly, who have once passed through the same process, and whose hearts are enlivened by the reminiscences of past occurrences, too recent to be forgotten, tarry in the room to the last moment, till sleep weighing down the eyelids of the happy pair, the mother of the bridegroom gently calls them aside, and leaves them to rest undisturbed. In accordance with the old established custom, their bed is strewn with flowers and their bodies perfumed with otto of rose. This is not enough for the sprightly ladies, whose cup of amusement and merriment is not yet full. Even if the night be cold, regardless of the effects of exposure, they must *áripato*, or jealously watch through the crevices of windows, whether or not the boy talks to the girl, and if he do, what is the nature of the talk. Thus they pass the whole night prying and

* It is perhaps not generally known that the dinner of a native, Hindoo or Mussulman, male or female, is not considered complete, until he chews his *pān beera* or betel. The bridegroom after eating and washing his mouth chews his usual *pān*, and is asked to give a portion thereof to the bride; he hesitates at first, but consents at length to give it into the right hand of his elder brother's wife, who forcibly thrusts the same into the mouth of the bride, observing at the same time that their mutual repugnance on this score will soon be overcome when their incipient affection grows into true love.

laughing, chatting with each other on subjects suited to their taste and modes of thought. When morning dawns, the boy opens the door and goes outside; and the girl slowly walks to her maid-servants, who accompanied her from her father's house. Her whole desire is to get back to her mother and sisters; nothing can reconcile her to her new home; novelty has no charms for her away from her paternal domicile. She repeatedly asks her maid-servants as to when the *pálki* will come, and what is the time fixed for her *játtrá* (departure); the maid-servants, consoling her, induce her to wash her mouth and break her fast with a few sweetmeats. In obedience to the kind instruction of her mother, she sits closely veiled and talks little, if at all, even to young girls of her own age. She next takes her *vojan*, or dinner; and to while away the time, little girls try to amuse her with toys or a game at cards; at length the time comes for the toilet work, and the arrival of the covered *Mahápáyá* is announced. She again takes a few sweetmeats, and, making a *pranám* (bow) to all her superiors, is helped into the Pálki by her mother-in-law, a female having previously washed her feet. The usual benediction on such an occasion is, "may you continue to live under the roof of your father-in law in the enjoyment of conjugal bliss."

On the arrival of the *Mahápáyá* at her father's house, almost all the females come out for a moment, taking care previously to have the outer door bolted and the Pálki-bearers removed. They cheerfully welcome the return of the girl home. Her mother, unveiling her face and taking her in her arms, thus affectionately addresses her, "my *Báchhá* (child), my *sonárchánd* (golden moon), where have you been? Did not your heart mourn for us? Our house looked *khá-khá* (desolate) in your absence. What did they (the bridegroom's family) say about our *dewa-thowa* (presents)? Did they express any *nindá* (dissatisfaction)? How have the women behaved towards you? How are your *sássurí* and *sasur* (mother-in-law and father-in law)?" Thus interrogating, they all walk inside; and, making

the girl change her silk clothes and sit near them, they begin to examine and criticise the ornaments given her by her father-in-law. "Let us see the pearl necklace *first*," says Bhupadá. "The pearls are not smooth and round, what may be its value?" *Giri Bálá*, taking her own pearl necklace from off her neck, compares the one with the other. They unanimously pronounce the latter to be more costly than the former; be that as it may, its value cannot be less than Rupees 500. They next take in hand the *pitjhápá*, ornament for the back; looking at it for a few minutes they pass their opinion, saying it is heavier and of better make than that of *Giri Balla's*. The *Sita-háur* or *Jarawya** (gold necklace), afterwards attracts their attention, and they roughly estimate its price at Rupees 350. It is not a little surprising that though these women are never permitted to go beyond the precincts of the zenana, yet their valuation of ornaments, unless it be in the case of *jarawya* jewellery of enormous cost, such as is worn on grand occasions by the wife of a "*big swell*," often bears the nearest approximation to the intrinsic worth of the article. Thus almost every ornament, one after another, forms the subject of their criticism. When the discussion is over, the girl is desired to take the greater portion of her ornaments off her body—save a pair of gold *bálás*† on her hands and a necklace on her neck—and leave them in the care of her mother. She then mixes in the company of other little girls of her own age, some married, some unmarried; who curiously ask her all about

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* *Jarawya* jewellery is set with precious stones, the value of which it is not easy to estimate.

† A Hindoo *Ayistrí*, *i. e.*, woman whose husband is alive, whether young or old, is religiously forbidden to take off the *bálá* (bangle) from her hands; it is a badge of *Ayistrism*; even when dead a red thread is substituted in the place of the *bálá*, so great is the importance attached to it by *Ayistrí* females. When the *bálá* is not seen on the hand, it is called the *rár-hatha*, or the hand of a widow, than which there could not be a more reproachful term.

her new friends, until their talk resumes its usual childish topics. She passes the day among them very pleasantly, so much so that when her mother calls her to take her luncheon, she stays back and says only "*jachi-jachi*," (coming, coming,) her mind being so much absorbed in her juvenile sports.

The next day is again a day of trial for her, she has to go for *gharbasath** to her father-in-law's house. On awaking, she remembers where she will have to go in the course of the day; a feeling bordering on sulkiness almost unconsciously steals upon her, and as time passes it increases in intensity. About four in the afternoon the arrival of the *Mahápáyá* is announced; her sister combs her hair and adorns her person with all the ornaments she has lately received. Dressed in her bridal silk *sárí*, her eyes seem charged with tears, and symptoms of reluctance are visible in every step; but go she must; no alternative is left her. So her mother helps her into the *Mahápáyá*, and orders a darwan and two maid-servants to accompany her, not forgetting to assure her that she is to be brought back the next day. Despite this assurance, she whimpers and weeps, and is consoled on the way by her maid-servants. At her father-in-law's, young girls of her own age, impatient to receive her, are seen moving backwards and forwards to get a glimpse of the *Mahápáyá*, the arrival of which is a signal for almost all the ladies to come out and greet the object of their affection. Her mother-in-law steps forward, and taking up the girl in her arms walks inside, followed by a train of other ladies, whose

* *Gharbasath* implies dwelling in a father-in-law's house. If the bride do not go there within eight days after marriage, she cannot do so for one year; but after *gharbasath* she can go and come back any time when necessary. The object is to impress on her mind that her father-in-law's house is her future home. It is on this occasion that the worship of *Subachaní* already described is performed, and both the bridegroom and bride are taken to the *Káli Ghát* to sanctify the hallowed union and obtain the blessings of the goddess

hearts are exhilarated again at the prospect of merriment at the expense of the married pair. When the time comes round for them to retire, the same scene of *aripáta* is re-enacted by the mirth-loving ladies, with all their "quips and cranks and wanton wiles." At day-break, the girl, as might be expected, quietly walks to her confidential maid-servant, and whispers to her to go and tell her mother to send the *Mahápáyá* Pálki as early as possible. Bearing this message, one of them goes for the purpose; but the mother replies, "How can she send the Pálki except at the lucky hour after dinner?" When this reply is communicated to the girl, she sits sulkily aloof, until her mother-in-law coaxes her, and offers for her breakfast a few sweetmeats with milk. After a great deal of hesitation she complies with her request, which, to be effective, is always accompanied by a threat of not allowing her to return to her father's in the event of a refusal. About ten o'clock she takes her regular breakfast as described before; but she does not eat with zest, for whatever delicacy may be offered her, it palls upon her taste, continually brooding on the idea of the return home. This is the day when the bride-groom and the bride untie from each other's hand the yellow home-spun *charká* thread with which they were entwined on the day of marriage as a mark of their indissoluble union. At length the lucky hour arrives, and with it the *Mahápáyá* comes. The very announcement of the fact revives the drooping spirits of the bride. After going through the usual toilet work and a slight repast, she gets into the covered conveyance, assisted by her mother-in-law and other ladies. When she returns home, she changes her bridal silk garment and strips herself of the greater portion of her ornaments. Now, uncontrolled and unreserved, she breathes a free, genial atmosphere; her mother and sisters welcome her with heart-felt congratulations, and she moves about with her wonted buoyancy of spirits. Throwing aside her sulkiness, she joins readily in conversation with all around her. She praises the

amiable qualities of her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and the very kind treatment she has had while under their roof, but she keeps her reserve when even the slightest allusion is made to her husband, because this is to her young mind forbidden ground on which she cannot venture to tread.

At the marriages of rich families, as will be understood from our description, vast sums of money are expended. The greatest expense is incurred in purchasing jewels and making presents of brass utensils, shawls, clothes, sweetmeats, &c., to Bráhmans, Kulins, *Ghataks* and numerous friends, relatives and acquaintances, besides illuminations, fireworks, and all the pageantry of a pompous procession. In and about Calcutta, the Rájás of Shobábázár, the De family, the Mallik family, the Tagore family, the Datta family, the Ghosál family, and others, are reported to have spent from fifty thousand rupees to two lakhs (£5,000 to £20,000) and upwards in the marriages of their sons. Whilst writing this, I am told that the Mahárájá Jotendro Mohan Tagore has expended about two lakhs of rupees in the marriage of his nephew. The most interesting feature in the extraordinary munificence of the Mahárájá is, as I have learnt, his princely contribution to the "District Charitable Society,"—an act of benevolence which has shewn, in a very conspicuous manner, not only his good sense, but his warm sympathy with the cause of suffering humanity. It were to be wished that his noble example would exercise some influence on other Hindoo millionaires. If a tithe of such marriage expenses were devoted to Public Charity, the poor and helpless would ceaselessly chant the names of such donors, and the reward would be something better than the transient admiration of the idle populace.

For one or two years after marriage, the girl generally remains under the paternal roof, occasionally paying a visit to her father-in-law's as need be. As she advances in years, her repugnance—the effect of early marriage—to live with her

husband is gradually overcome, till time and circumstances completely reconcile her to her future home. Her affection grows, and she learns to appreciate the grave meaning of a married life. She is still, however, but a girl, in habit and ideas, when the real union of wedded life, or the second marriage, takes place, say at her twelfth or thirteenth year. There is a popular belief, whether erroneous or not it is not for me to decide, that in this country heat accelerates growth, and hence the Hindoo Shástras enjoin the necessity of early marriage, the injurious consequences of which are chiefly seen in the weak constitution of the offspring, and the premature decay of the mother.

On this occasion, the officiating priest reading, and the bridegroom repeating the service after him, presents offerings of rice, sweetmeats, plantains, clothes, durva grass, fruits and flowers, to the following gods and goddesses, *viz.*, *Shasthi*, *Márkando*, *Surjya*, *Subachani*, *Ganesha*, and the nine planets, much in the same way as when the nuptial rites were formally solemnized. After this the hands of the bridegroom and the bride are joined together, and the priest repeating certain formulas, the bridegroom then causes a ring to slide between the bride's silk garment and her waist. Twenty-one small images (twenty male and one female), made of ground rice, are placed before the happy pair, and the priest feeds the bride with sugar, clarified butter, milk, &c., to ensure the purity of the offspring. They then partake of a good dinner, the bride taking the residue of the bridegroom's meal. The twenty-one images are put into the room of the pair as a token of happy offspring, and the proportion of the males to the females shews the estimation in which they are respectively held. The bride now takes up her permanent residence in the house of her father-in-law and becomes one of his family.

For a year after the marriage, the parents of the bridegroom and the bride have to make exchanges of suitable presents to one another at all the grand festivals. At the first *tatwa*, or

present, besides clothes, heaps of fruits, sweetmeats, English toys and sundries, the father of the youth gives one complete set of miniature silver and brass utensils to the girl, while in return the father of the girl sends such presents as a table, chair, writing desk, silver inkstand, gold and silver pencil cases, stationery, perfumery, &c., in addition to an equally large quantity of choice eatables of all kinds too numerous to be detailed. The most expensive presents are two, namely, the *sitori* or winter present, and the Durgá-pujá present, the former requiring a Cashmere shawl, *chogá*, and sundry other articles of use; and the latter, fine Dacca and silk clothes to the whole family, including men, women and children.

Though a Hindoo bears a great love and affection to his wife while she lives, yet, in the event of her death, these amiable qualities are too soon effaced by the strong influence of a new passion, and another union is very speedily formed. Even during the period of his mourning, which lasts one month, proposals for a second marriage are entertained, if not by the husband himself, by his father or elder brother. When the remembrance of this heavy domestic bereavement is so very fresh in the memory, it is highly unbecoming and ungenerous to open or enter into a matrimonial negotiation, and have it consummated immediately after the *asúchi*, or mourning, is over. A wife is certainly not a beast of burden that is no sooner removed by death than it may be replaced by another. In regard to the whole conduct and relations of the married life, Hindoos cannot have the golden rule too strongly impressed: "Let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself; and let the wife see that she reverences her husband."

VI.

THE BROTHER FESTIVAL.

ANY social institution that has a tendency to promote the growth of genuine love and affection between man and woman, is naturally conducive to the happiness of both. In this sublunary vale of tears, where unalloyed felicity is but transient, even a temporary exemption from the cares and anxieties of the world adds at least some moments of pleasure to life. The *Bhratridvitiya*, or *fraternal* rite of the Hindoos, is an institution of this nature, being admirably calculated to cement the natural bond of union between brothers and sisters of the same family. Bhratridvitiya, as the name imports, takes place on the second day of the new moon immediately following the Kálí-pujá, or Dewali. On the morning of this day, a brother comes to the house of a sister, and receives from her hand the usual benedictive present of unhusked rice, durva-grass and sandal, with a wealth of good wishes for his long and prosperous life, and the happy commemoration of the event from year to year. The brother in return reciprocates, and putting a rupee or two into her hands, expresses a similar good wish, with the addition that she may long continue to enjoy the blessings of a conjugal life,—a benediction which she values over every other wordly advantage. The main object of this festival is to renovate and intensify the warmth of affection between relatives of both sexes by blessing each other on a particular day of the year. It is a sort of family reunion, pre-eminently calculated to recall the early reminiscences of life, and to renew brotherly and sisterly love. No ritualistic rite, or priestly interposition, is necessary for the

purpose ; it is a purely social institution, originating in the love that sweetens life.

After interchanging salutations, the sister, who has every thing ready, thrice invokes a blessing upon the brother in a Bengali verse, and marks his forehead thrice with sandal paste from the tip of her little finger. She then serves him with the provisions provided for the festive occasion. Here genuine love and true affection almost spontaneously gush forth from the heart of the sister towards one who is united to her by the nearest tie of consanguinity and the tenderest remembrances. If the brother be not inclined to relish or taste a particular dish, how affectionately does she coax him to try it, adding at the same time that it has been prepared by her own hand with the greatest care. Any little dislike evinced by the brother instantly bathes her eyes in tears, and disposes her to exclaim somewhat in the following strain: "Why is this slight towards a poor sister who was up till twelve o'clock last night to prepare for you the *chandra-pulí* and *Khirarchhách* (two sorts of home-made sweetmeats), regardless of the cries of *Khoká* (the baby)?" Such a pathetic, tender expression bursting from the lips of a loving sister cannot fail to melt a brother's heart, and overcome his dislike.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, the sister sends, as tangible memorials of her affection, presents of clothes and sweetmeats to the house of the brother, fondly indulging in the hope that they may be acceptable to him. On this particular day, Hindoo homes, as well as the streets of Calcutta in the native part of the town, present the lively appearance of a national jubilee. Each of the brothers of the family visits each of the sisters in turn. Hundreds of servants are busy carrying presents, and return home quite delighted. On such occasions the heart of a Hindoo female, naturally soft and tender, becomes doubly expansive when the outflow of love and affection on her part is fully reciprocated by the effusion of good wishes on the part of her brother.

VII.

THE SON-IN-LAW FESTIVAL.

IF not precisely analogous in all its prominent features to the popular festival described in the preceding Chapter, the following bears a striking resemblance to it, in its adaptation to promote domestic happiness. The festival familiarly known in Bengal by the name of "*Jámái Shasthí*" is an entertainment given in honor of a son-in-law, in order to bind him more closely to his wife's family.

Nothing better illustrates the manners and usages of a nation from a social and religious standpoint than the festivals and ceremonies which are observed by it. They form the essential parts of what DeQuincey calls the equipage of life. As a nation, the Hindoos are proverbially fond of festivals, which are engrafted, as it were, on their peculiar domestic and social economy. A designing priesthood has concocted an almost endless round of superstitious rites with the view of acquiring power, looking for permanent reverence to the credulity of the blind devotees. Such foolish rites are eventually destined to fall into desuetude, as popular enlightenment progresses; but those which are free from the taint of priestcraft, and which are interwoven into the social amenities of life, are likely to prevail long after the subversion of priestly ascendency. And *Jámái Shasthi* is a festival of this unobjectionable type. No superstitious element enters into its observance.

It invariably takes place on the sixth day* of the increase of the moon in the Bengali month of May, when ripe mangoes —the prince of Indian fruits—are in full season. Then all the mothers-in-law in Bengal are on the alert to welcome their sons-in-law, and turn a new leaf in the chapter of their joys. A good son-in-law is emphatically the most darling object of a Hindoo mother-in-law. She spares no possible pains to please and satisfy him, even calling to her aid the supernatural agency of charms. Ostensibly and even practically a Hindoo mother-in-law loves her son-in-law more than her son, simply because the son can shift for himself even if turned adrift in the wide world, but the daughter is absolutely helpless, and the cruel institution of perpetual widowhood, with its appalling amount of misery and risk, renders her tenfold more helpless.

On this festive occasion, the son-in-law is invited to spend the day and night at his father-in-law's house. No pains or expense is spared to entertain him. When he comes in the morning, the first thing he has to do is to go into the female apartment, bow his head down in honor of his mother-in-law, and put on the floor a few rupees, say five or ten, sometimes more if newly married. The food consists of all the delicacies of the season, and both the quantity and variety are often too great to be done justice to. The perfection of Hindoo culinary art is unreservedly brought into requisition

* It appears to me rather anomalous, as far as Hindoo astrology is concerned, that such a national jubilee is fixed to be celebrated on this particular day. The Hindoo almanac marks *Shasthí*, the sixth day of the moon, as *dagdhá*, or destructive of any good thing. A Hindoo is religiously forbidden to commence any important work or set out on a journey on this day. It portends evil. Respectable Hindoo females, who have children, do not eat boiled rice on this particular day, for fear of becoming Rákshasis or cannibals, prone to destroy their own offspring. The goddess Shasthí íis the protectress of children. She is worshipped six times in the year by all the women of Bengal, except such as are barren or virgin-widows.

on such occasions. Surrounded by a galaxy of beauty, the youthful son-in-law is restrained by a sense of shame from freely partaking of the feast specially provided for him. The earnest importunity of the women urges the bashful youth to eat more and more. If this be his first visit as son-in-law, he finds himself quite bewildered in the midst of superfluity and superabundance of preparations. Many are the tricks employed to outwit him. With all his natural shrewdness, and though forewarned by the women of his own family, he is no match for the playful humor and frolics of the young, sprightly ladies. Sham articles of food, cleverly dressed in close imitation of fruits and sweetmeats, are offered him without detection in the full blaze of day, and the attempt to partake of them excites bursts of laughter and merriment. The utmost female ingenuity is here brought into play to call forth amusement at the expense of the duped youth. In their own way, the good-natured females are mistresses of jokes and jests; and nothing pleases them better than to find the youthful new-comer completely nonplussed. This forms the favorite subject of their talk long after the event. Shut up in the cage of a secluded zenana, quite beyond the influence of the outside world, it is no wonder that their minds and thoughts do not rise above the trifles of their own narrow circle.

As in the case of the "Brother" festival, ample presents of clothes, fruits, and sweetmeats are sent to the house of the son-in-law, and every lane and street of Calcutta is thronged with male and female servants trudging along with their loads, in full hope of getting their share of eatables and a rupee or half a rupee each into the bargain.

VIII.

THE DÚRGÁ-PUJÁ FESTIVAL.

BY far the most popular religious festival of the present day among the Hindoos of Bengal, is the *Durgá-pujá*, which in the North-Western and Central Provinces is called the *Dasserá* festival. It is believed that the worship of the goddess Durgá has been performed from time out of mind. The following is a description of the image of the ten-handed goddess, which is set up for worship: "In one of her right hands is a spear, with which she is piercing the giant, Mahishásur; with one of the left she holds the tail of a serpent and the hair of the giant, whose breast the serpent is biting. Her other hands are all stretched behind her head and filled with different instruments of war. Against her right leg leans a lion, and against her left the above-mentioned giant. The images of Lakshmí, Saraswathì, Kartika and Ganesha are very frequently placed by the side of the goddess." The majestic deportment of the goddess, with her three eyes and ten arms, the warlike attitude in which she is represented, her sanguinary character which made her the terror of all other gods, and her mighty exploits (far surpassing in strength, courage and heroism those of the Greek Hercules), all combine to give her an importance in the eyes of the people, which is seldom vouchsafed to any other deity. Even *Bramá*, *Vishnu*, and *Shiva*, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer of the world, were said to have propitiated her; and *Ráma Chandra*, the deified hero, invoked her aid in his contest with *Rávana*; and, as he worshipped her in the month

of October, her pujá has, from that particular circumstance, been ever after appointed to take place in that period of the year.* A short description of this festival, the preliminary rites with which it is associated, and the national excitement and hilarity which its periodical return produces among the people, will not be altogether uninteresting to European readers.†

Twenty-one days before the commencement of the Durgá-pujá festival, a preliminary rite, by way of purifying the body and soul by means of ablution, is performed. This rite is called the "*Apar-pakshya tarpan*," so called from its taking place on the first day of *Pratipada* and ending on the fifteenth day of *Amábashyá*, an entire fortnight, immediately preceding the *Debipakkhya*, during which the pujá is celebrated. It generally falls between the fifteenth of September and the fifteenth of October. This popular festival, called Durgá-pujá in Bengal, and Dasserá or "the tenth" in the North-West, although entirely military in its origin, is universally respected. It is commemorative of the day on which the god Ráma Chandra first marched against his enemy, Rávana, in *Lanká*, or Ceylon, for the restoration of his wife, Sítá,‡ who

* Durgá is also worshipped in the month of April, in the time of the vernal equinox; but very few then offer her their devotion, though this celebration claims priority of origin.

† For some general remarks on the religion of the Hindoos, see Note C.

‡ "In this ancient story," says Tod, "we are made acquainted with the distant maritime wars which the princes of India carried on. Even supposing Rávana's abode to be the insular Ceylon, he must have been a very powerful prince to equip an armament sufficiently numerous to carry off from the remote kingdom of *Kousalā* the wife of the great king of the Suryas. It is most improbable that a petty king of Ceylon could wage equal war with a potentate who held the chief dominion of India, whose father, *Dasaratha*, drove his victorious car (*ratha*) over every region (*desa*), and whose intercourse with the countries beyond the Bramaputra is distinctly to be traced in the *Rámáyana*."

was deservedly regarded as the best model of devotion, resignation, and love, as is so beautifully painted by the poet:

> "A woman's bliss is found, not in the smile
> Of father, mother, friend, nor in herself:
> Her husband is her only portion here,
> Her heaven hereafter. If thou indeed
> Depart this day into the forest drear,
> I will precede, and smooth the thorny way."

In the mornings of *Apar-pakshya*, for fifteen days continually, those who live near the sacred stream go thither with a small copper-pan and some teel seeds, which they sprinkle on the water at short intervals, repeating the formulæ while in a state of half immersion. To a foreigner quite unacquainted with the meaning of these rites, the scene is well calculated to give the idea of the exceeding devotedness of the Hindoos in observing their religious ordinances. The holy water and teel seeds which are sprinkled are intended as offerings to the manes of ancestors for fourteen generations, that their souls may continue to enjoy repose to all eternity. The women, though some of them are in the habit of bathing in the holy stream every morning, are precluded by their sex from taking part in this ceremony. Precisely on the last day of the fortnight,—*i. e.*, on the *Amábashyá*, as if the object were attained, the rite of ablution ends, followed by another of a more comprehensive character. On this particular day, which is called *Mahálayá*,* the living again pay their homage to the memory of the fourteen generations of their ancestors by making them offerings of rice, fruits, sweetmeats, clothes, curded milk, and repeating the incantations said by the priest, at the conclusion of which he takes away all the articles presented, and receives his *dakshiná* of one rupee for his

* This is also the day which is vulgarly called the *Kalá-kátá Amábashyá*, when unripe plantain fruits are cut in immense quantities for offerings to Durgá.

trouble. Apart from their superstitious tendency, these anniversaries are not without their beneficial effects. They tend, in no small degree, to inspire the mind with a religious veneration for the memory of the departed worthies, and by the association of ideas not unfrequently bring to recollection their distinctive features and individual characteristics.

Some aristocratic families that have been observing this festival for a long series of years begin their *Kalpa*, or preliminary rite, on the ninth day of the decrease of the moon, when an earthen water-pot called *ghata** is placed in a room, called *bodanghar*, duly consecrated by the officiating priest, who, assisted by two other Bráhmans, invokes the blessing of the deity by reading a Sanskrit work, called *Chandí*, which relates the numerous deeds and exploits of the goddess. The Bráhman, who repeats the name of the god *Madhusudan*, seems, to all appearance, to be absorbed in mental abstraction. With closed eyes and moving fingers, not unlike the *Rishis* of old, he disdains to look at the external world. From early in the morning till 10 o'clock the worship before the earthen pot is continued. The officiating priests† are strictly prohibited from using *sidha* (rice), taking more than one meal a day, or sleeping with their wives, as if that would be an act of unpardonable profanation. This strict *regimé* is to be observed by them until the whole of the ceremonial is completed, on the tenth day of the new moon. It should be mentioned here that the majority of the Hindoos begin their *kalpa*, or preliminary rite, on *Pratipada*, or the beginning of the new moon; when almost every town and village echoes with the sound of

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* This sacred jar is marked with two combined triangles, denoting the union of the two deities, Siva and Durgá—the worshippers of the *Saktí*, or female energy, mark the jar with another triangle.

† The day before the *Kalpa* begins, these priests receive new clothes, comprising a *dhutie* and *dobjá*, and some money for *habishay*, or food without fish. Very few, however, abide by the rules enjoined in the holy writings.

conch, bell and gong, awakening latent religious emotions, and evoking *agamaney* (songs or inaugural invocations), which deeply affect the hearts of Durgá's devout followers. Some of these rhythmic effusions are exceedingly pathetic. I wish I could give a specimen here of these songs divested of their idolatrous tinge; but I am afraid of offending the ears of my European readers.

The Bráhmans,* as a rule, commence their *kalpa* on the sixth day or one day only before the beginning of the grand pujá, on the seventh day of the new moon. From the commencement of the initial rite, what thrilling sensations of delight are awakened in the bosom of the young boys and girls! Every morning and evening while the ceremony is being solemnized, they scramble with each other to get striking the gong and *kásar*, which produces a harsh, deafening sound. Their excitement increases in proportion to the nearer approach of the festival, and the impression which they thus receive in their early days is not entirely effaced even after their minds are regenerated by the irresistible light of truth. The women, too, manifest mingled sensations of delight and reverence. If they are incapable of striking the gongs, they are susceptible of deep devotional feelings, which the solemnity of the occasion naturally inspires. The encircling of their neck with the end of their *sárí*, or garment, expressive of humility, the solemn attitude in which they stand, their inaudible muttering of the name of the goddess, and their prostrating themselves before the consecrated pot in a spirit of perfect resignation, denote a state of mind full of religious fervour, or, more properly speaking, of superstitious awe, which goes with them to their final resting place. On the night of the sixth day (Shashthí) after the increase of the moon, another rite is per-

* Even in the observance of this religious preliminary, the Bráhmans take advantage of their superior caste, and curtail five days out of six in order to save expense. Every thing is allowable in their case, because they assume to be the oracles between god and man.

formed, which is termed *Adhibassí*, its object being to welcome the advent of the visible goddess with all the necessary paraphernalia. Another sacred earthen pot is placed in the outer temple of the goddess, and a young plantain tree, with a couple of wood apples intended for the breast, is trimmed for the next morning's ablution. This plantain tree, called *kalábau*, is designed as a personification of Durgá in another shape. It is dressed in a silk *sári*, its head is daubed with vermilion* and is placed by the side of Ganesha. Musicians with their ponderous *dhák* and *dhole* and *sánái* (flutes) are retained for five days at 12 to 16 rupees for the occasion. That music imparts a solemnity to religious service is admitted by all; but its harmony may be taken as an indication of the degree of refinement to which a nation has attained in the scale of civilization. What with the sonorous sound of *dhák*, and *dhole*, *sánái*, conch and gong, the effect cannot fail to be impressive to a devout Hindoo mind. Except Bráhmans, no one is allowed to touch the idol from this night, after the *belbaran*, when it is supposed that animation is imparted to it. By the marvellous repetition of a few incantations a perfectly inanimate object, stuffed only with clay and straw, and painted, varnished and ornamented in all the tawdriness of oriental fashion, is suddenly metamorphosed into a living divinity. Can religious jugglery and blind credulity go farther?

It will not be out of place to say a few words here about the embellishments of the images. As a refined taste is being cultivated, a growing desire is manifested to decorate the idols with splendid tinsel and gewgaws, which are admirably calculated to heighten the magnificence of the spectacle in popular estimation. Apart from the feast of colors presented to public view, the idols are adorned with tinsel ornaments, which, to an

* The vermilion is used by a Hindoo female whose husband is *alive*, the privilege of putting it on the forehead is considered a sign of great merit and virtue.

untutored mind, are in the highest degree captivating. Some families in affluent circumstances literally rack their brains to discover new and more gaudy embellishments, which, when compared with those of their neighbours, may carry off the bubble reputation. It is perhaps not generally known that a certain class of men—chiefly drawn from the lower strata of society—subsist on this trade; they prepare a magnificent stock of tinsel wares for a twelve-month, and supply the entire Hindoo community, from Calcutta to the remotest provinces and villages. Indeed so great is the rage for novelty, and so strong the influence of vanity, that not content with costly home-made ornaments, some of the Babus send their orders to England for new patterns, designs, and devices that they may be able to make an impression on the popular mind; and as English taste is incomparably superior to native taste both in the excellence and finish of workmanship and in elegance of design, the images that shine in new-fashioned English embellishments * are sure to challenge the admiration of the populace. On the day of *Niranjan*, or *Vásán*, as it is vulgarly called, countless myriads of people throng the principal streets of Calcutta, to catch a glimpse of the celebrated *pritimás*, or images, and carry the information home to their absent friends in the villages.

Before sunrise on *Saptamí*, or the seventh day of the bright phase of the moon, the officiating priest, accompanied by bands of musicians and a few members of the family, proceeds barefooted to the river side, bearing on his shoulder the *kalábau*, or plantain tree, described above, with an air

* It is no less strange than surprising that ornamental articles, prepared by the hands of European artisans who are accustomed to eat beef and pork, the very mention, and much more the touch, of which contaminates the purity of religion, are put on the bodies and heads of Hindoo gods without the least religious scruple, simply for the gratification of vanity. So much for the consistent and immaculate character of the Hindoo creed!

of gravity as if he had charge of a treasure-chest of great value. These processions are conducted with a degree of pomp corresponding with the other extraneous splendours of the festival. In Calcutta, bands of English musicians, and numbers of staff-holders with high-flying colors, give an importance to the scene, which is not ill-suited to satisfy the vulgar taste. After performing some minor ceremonies on the banks of the river, and bathing the plantain tree, the procession returns home, escorting the officiating priest with his precious charge in the same way in which he was conveyed to the Ghát. On reaching home, the priest, washing his feet, proceeds to rebathe the plantain tree, rubbing on its body all kinds of scented oils* as if to prepare it for a gay, convivial party. This part of the ceremony, with appropriate incantations, being gone through, the plantain tree is placed again by the side of the image of Ganesha, who, being the eldest son of Durgá, must be worshipped *first*. Thus the right of precedence is in full force even among the Hindoo gods and goddesses.

Previous to the commencement of the *Saptamí*, or first pujá, the officiating priest again consecrates the goddess Durgá, somewhat in the following manner: "O goddess, come and dwell in this image, and bless him that worships you," naming the person, male or female, who is to reap the benefit of the meritorious act. Thus the business of giving life and eyes to the goddess being finished, the priest, with two forefingers of his right hand, touches the forehead, cheeks, eyes, breast and other parts of the image, repeating all the while the prescribed incantation: "May the soul of Durgá

* These scented oils are mostly prepared by Mussulmans, whose very touch is enough to desecrate a thing; yet the Bráhmans, knowing this fact, unhesitatingly use them for religious purposes. Thus we see in almost every sphere of social and domestic life the fundamental rules of religious purity are shamefully violated.

long continue to dwell in this image." This part of the ceremony, which is accompanied with music, being performed, offerings are made to all the gods and goddesses, as well as to the companions of Durgá in her wars, which are painted in variegated colors on the *chál*, or canopy, in the form of a crescent over the goddess. The offerings consist principally of small pieces of gold and silver, rice, fruits, sweetmeats, cloth, brass utensils and a few other things. These are arranged in large round wooden or brass plates, and a bit of flower or *bael* leaf is cast upon them to guard against their being desecrated by the demon Rávana, who is supposed to take delight in insulting the gods and goddesses; the officiating priest then consecrates them all by repeating a short mantra and sprinkling flowers and *bael* leaves on them, particular regard being had to the worship of the whole host of deities, according to their respective position in the Hindoo pantheon. Even the most subordinate and insignificant gods or companions of Durgá must be propitiated by small bits of plantain and a few grains of rice, which are afterwards given to the idol-makers and painters. More valuable offerings form the portion of the Bráhmans, who look upon and claim these as their birthright. In the evening, as in the morning, the goddess is again worshipped; and while the service is being held, the musicians are called to play their musical instruments with a view to add to the solemnity of the occasion. In the morning, some persons sacrifice goats and fruits, such as pumpkin, sugarcane, &c., before the goddess. In the present day, many respectable families have discontinued the practice, from a feeling of compassion towards the dumb animals, though express injunctions are laid down in the Shástras in its favor. It is a remarkable fact that the idea of sacrifice as a religious institution tending to effect the remission of sin was almost co-existent with the first dawn of human knowledge. The Reverend Dr. K. M. Banerjea thus writes: "Of the inscrutable Will of the Almighty, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin,

this, too, appears imbedded in ancient Ayrian tradition, in the *sruti* or hearings of our ancestors." Next to the Jews, this religious duty was most scrupulously observed by the Bráhmans. Names of priests, words for fire, for those on whose behalf the sacrifices were performed, and for the materials with which they were performed, abound in language etymologically derived from words implying sacrifice. No literature contains so many vocables relating to sacrificial ceremonies as Sanskrit. Kátyayana says: "Heaven and all other happiness are the results of sacrificial ceremonies." And it was a stereotyped idea with the founders of Hindooism that animals were created for sacrifices. Nor were these in olden days considered mere offerings of meat to certain carnivorous deities, followed by the sacrificers themselves feasting on the same, as the practice of the day represents the idea. The various nature of the sacrifices appears to have been substantially comprehended by the promoters of the institution in India. The sacrificer believed himself to be redeemed by means of the sacrifice. The animal sacrificed was itself called the sacrifice, because it was the ransom for the soul. If we leave India and go back to the traditions and history of other ancient nations, we shall find many instances, proving the existence among them of the sacrificial rite for the remission of sin and the propitiation of the Deity. The hecatombs of Greece, and the memorable dedication of the temple of Solomon, when 20,000 oxen* and

* It is deserving of notice that the slaughter of oxen, cows or calves is most religiously forbidden in the Hindoo Shástra. Divine honors are paid to the species. The cow is regarded as a form of Durgá and called Bhagabatí. The husband of Durgá, Siva, rides naked on an ox. The very *dung* of a cow purifies all unclean things in a Hindoo household, and possesses the property of a disinfectant. The milk of a cow assuredly affords the best nourishment to the young and the old; hence the species was deified by the Hindoo sages. Even now, more than two centuries after the advent of the English into this country, an orthodox Hindoo is apt to exclaim "what impious times?" whenever he happens to see a Massalman butcher driving a

100,000 sheep were slain before the altar, are too well known to need any comment.

In these later ages, when degeneracy has made rapid strides amongst the people of the country, the original intention of the founder of the institution being lost sight of, a perverted taste has given it an essentially sensual character. Instead of offering sacrifice from purely religious motives, it is now done for the gratification of carnivorous appetite. The late king of Nadiá, Rájá Krishna Chandra Roy, though an orthodox Hindoo of the truest type, was said to have offered at one of these festivals a very large number of goats and sheep to the goddess Durgá. "He began," says Ward, "with one, and, doubling the number each day, continued it for sixteen days. On the last day he killed 32,768, and on the whole he slaughtered 65,535 animals. He loaded boats with the bodies and sent them to the neighbouring Bráhmans, but they could not devour them fast enough, and great numbers were thrown away. Let no one, after this, tell us of the scruples of the Bráhmans about destroying animal life and eating animal food."

About twelve o'clock in the day, when the morning service is over, the male members of the family make their *puspanjali*, or offerings of flowers, to the images, repeating an incantation recited by the priest, for all kinds of worldly blessings, such as health, wealth, fame, long age, children, &c. The women come in afterwards for the same hallowed purpose, and inaudibly recite the incantation repeated by the priest inside the screen. The very sight of the images gladdens

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cow or a calf in the street for slaughtering purposes. Not a few wonder how the English power continues to prosper amidst the daily perpetration of such irreligious acts. By way of derision, the English are called *gokhádák*, or beef-eaters, and the *goylas* (milkmen) *kasáyes*, or butchers. If such Hindoos had the power, they would certainly deliver their country from the grasp of these beef-eaters and place it above the reach of sacrilegious hands. But alas ! in the present *Kali-yuga*, or iron age, both they and their gods are alike impotent.

their hearts and quickens their pulse. Though fasting, they feel an extreme reluctance to leave the shrine and the divinities, declaring that their hunger and thirst are gone, not from actual eating and drinking but from their fulness of heart at the presence of *Má Durgá.* But go they must, to make way for the servants to remove the offerings, distribute them among the Bráhmans, and clean the temple for the evening service, at the close of which Bráhmans and other guests begin to come in and partake of the entertainment* provided for the occasion.

On the second day of the pujá, offerings and sacrifices are made in the same manner as on the first day, but this is considered a specially holy day, being the day, as is generally supposed, when the mighty goddess is expected to come down from the mount Himálaya, and cast a glance of her eye upon the divers offerings of her devotees in the terrestrial world. This day is called *Mahá Astamí*, being the eighth day of the

* It is generally known that, except the Bráhmans, who are proverbially noted for their eating propensities, scarcely any respectable Hindoo condescends to sit down to a regular *jalpán* dinner at this popular festival. He comes, gives his usual *pronámi* of one rupee to the goddess in the *thakurdálán*, talks with the owner of the house for a few minutes, is presented by way of compliment with otto-of-roses and pán, and then goes away, making the stereotyped plea that he has many other places to go to. Besides this, every man is expected to provide himself at home with a good stock of choice eatables on this festive occasion. The prices of sweetmeats, already too high, are nearly doubled at this time, because of the large demand and small supply. From 32 rupees a maund (82 lbs), the normal price of *sandesh* in ordinary times, it rises to 60 or 70 rupees in the pujá time. Milk sells at four annas a pound, and without milk no *sandesh* can be made. It is the most expensive article of food among the Hindoos of Bengal. When well made with fresh *chhánná* (curded milk) it has a fine taste, but is entirely destitute of any nutritive property. The Hindoos of the Upper Provinces, however, do not regard the preparation as *pure*, and consequently do not use it, because of its admixture with curded milk.

increase of the moon, and is religiously observed throughout Bengal. In Calcutta, this is the day when thousands and tens of thousands of Hindoos, who have had no pujá in their own houses, proceed to Kálí Ghát in the suburbs, and before breaking their fast make suitable offerings to the goddess Kálí, who, according to Hindoo mythology, is but another incarnation of the goddess Durgá. Except little children, almost all the members of a family, male and female, together with the priest, fast all day, and, if the combination of stars require it, almost the whole night. Elderly men of the orthodox type devote the precious time to religious contemplation. Until the *Mahá Astami* and its necessary adjunct, *Shandhyá-pujá*, is finished, all are on the *qui vive.* It generally happens that this service is fixed by astrologers to take place before night's midmost stillest hour is past, when nature seems to repose in a state of perfect quiescence, and to call forth the religious fervour of the devotees. As the edge of hunger is sharpened, a Hindoo most anxiously looks at his watch or clock to see when the precious moment will arrive; and as the hour draws near, men, women and children are all hushed into silence. Not a whisper nor a sound is to be heard. All is anxiety, suspense, and expectation, as if the arrival of the exact time would herald the advent of a true Saviour into the world. Amid perfect silence and stillness, all ears are stretched to catch the sound of the gun* which announces the *precise minute* when this most important of all pujás is to begin. As soon as the announcement is made by the firing of a gun, the priest in all haste enters on the work of worship, and invokes the blessings of the goddess on himself and the family. When the time of sacrifice arrives, which is made known by the sound of another gun, all the living souls in the house are bade to stand aloof, the

* Rich men are in the habit of firing guns for the guidance of the people.

priest with trembling hands and in a state of trepidation consecrates the *khárá*, or scimitar, with which the sacrifice is to be made, and placing the *khapparer sará* by the side of the *harikát*, (the sacrificial log of wood) bids the blacksmith finish his bloody work. Should the latter cut off the head of the goat at one stroke, all eyes are turned towards him with joy. The priest, the master, and the inmates of the house, who are all this while in a state of mental agitation, now begin to congratulate each other on their good luck, praying for the return of the goddess every year.

Nor must I omit to mention the other secondary rites which are performed on the second day of the pujá. Besides absolute fasting, the females of the household actually undergo a fiery ordeal. About one in the afternoon, when the tumult and bustle have subsided a little, all males are told to go away; and then the women, unveiling their faces, and holding in each hand a *sará* or earthen plate of burning rosin, squat down before the shrine of the goddess, and in the posture of penitent sinners, implore in a fervent spirit the benediction of the goddess on behalf of their sons, while the rosin continues to burn in slow fire. As if without consciousness, they remain in that trying state for more than half an hour, absorbed in holy meditation, repeating in their minds at the same time the names of their guardian deities. Towards the close of this penitent service, a son is asked to sit on the lap of his mother. Barren women, to whom Providence has denied this inestimable blessing, must go without this domestic felicity resulting in religious consolation, and not only mourn their present forlorn condition, but pray for a happier one in the next life. A few puncture their breasts with a slender iron *narun*, or nail-cutter, and offer a few drops of blood to the goddess, under the notion that the severer the penance the greater the merit. Many women still go through this truly revolting ordeal at Kálí Ghát, in fulfilment of vows made in times of sickness.

Another ceremony which is performed by the females on

this particular day is their worship of living Bráhman *kumáris* (virgins) and matrons (*sadhavás*). After washing and wiping the feet of the objects of their worship, with folded hands, and, with the end of their *sárí* tied round their necks, in a reverential mood, they fall prostrate before the Bráhman women, and crave blessings, which, when graciously vouchsafed, are followed by offerings of sweetmeats, clothes and rupees. The purpose of this ceremony is to obtain exemption from the indescribable misery of widowhood, and to ensure the enjoyment of domestic happiness.

On the third or last day of the pujá, being the ninth day of the increase of the moon, the prescribed ritualistic ceremonies having been performed, the officiating priests make the *homa* and *dakshinanto*, a rite, the meaning of which is to present farewell offerings to the goddess for one year, adding a suitable prayer that she will be graciously pleased to forgive the present shortcomings on the part of her devotees, and vouchsafe to them her blessings in this world as well as in the world to come. This is a very critical time for the priests, because the finale of the ceremony involves the important question of their respective gains. Weak and selfish as human nature assuredly is, each of them (generally three in number) fights for his own individual interest, justifying his claim on the score of the religious austerities he has had to undergo, and the devotional fervour with which his sacred duties have been discharged. Until this knotty question is satisfactorily solved, they forbear pronouncing the last *mantra* or prayer. It is necessary to add here that the presents of rupees which the numerous guests have offered to the goddess during the three days of the pujá, go to swell the fund of the priest, to which the proprietor of the idol must add a separate sum, without which this act of merit loses its final reward in a future state. The devotee must satisfy the cupidity of the priests or run the risk of forfeiting divine mercy. When the problem is ultimately solved in favor of the officiating

priest who actually performs the pujá, and sums of money are put into the hands of the Bráhmans, the last prayer is read. It is not perhaps generally known that the income the Indian ecclesiastics derive from this source supports them for the greater part of the year, with a little gain in money or kind from the land they own.

The last day of the pujá is attended with many offerings of goats, sheep, buffaloes* and fruits. The area before the shrine becomes a short of slaughterhouse, slippery with gore and mire, and resounding with the cries of the dying victims, and the still more vociferous shouts of "*Má, Má*," uttered by the rabble amidst the discordant sound of gongs and drums. Some of the deluded devotees, losing all sense of shame and decency, smear their bodies from head to foot with this bloody mire, and begin to dance before the goddess and the assembled multitude like wild furies. In this state of bestial fanaticism, utterly ignoring the ordinary rules of public decorum, and literally intoxicated with the glory of the meritorious act, the deluded mob, preceded by musicians, proceed from one house to another in the neighbourhood where the image has been set up, sing obscene songs, and otherwise make indecent gestures which are an outrage alike on public morals and on common decency. When quite exhausted by these abominable orgies, they go and bathe in a river or a tank, and return home, thinking how to make the most of the last night. Should any sober-minded person remonstrate with them on their foolish conduct, the stereotyped reply is—"this is *Mahámáyer Bázár* and the last day of the pujá, when all sorts of tomfoolery and revelry are justifiable." The sensible portion of the community, it must be mentioned, keep quite aloof from such immoral exhibitions.

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* The flesh of buffaloes is used only by sweepers, shoemakers, &c., who sometimes quarrel for the possession of the slaughtered animals. These people eat the meat along with country liquor, and the sacrifice thus frequently ends in a drunken feast.

However great may have been the veneration or the depth of devotional feeling in which the Durgá-pujá was held among the Hindoos of bygone ages, it is certain that in the lapse of time this and all other national festivals have lost their original religious character, and in the majority of cases degenerated into profanities and impure orgies, which renew the periodical license for the unrestrained indulgence of sensuality, not to speak of the dissipation and debauchery which it usually brings in its train. Except a few patriarchal Hindoos, whose minds are deeply imbued with traditional religious prepossessions, the generality celebrate the pujá for the sake of name and fame, no less than for the purposes of amusement, and for the satisfaction of the women and children, who still retain, and will continue to do so for a long time to come, a profound veneration for the old *Durgá Utsab.* Apart from the children, whose minds are susceptible of any impression, the women are the main prop of the idolatrous institutions and of the colossal superstructure of Hindoo superstition. If I am not much mistaken, it was to satisfy them that such distinguished Hindoo reformers as the late Babus Dwarkanath Tagore, Prasannakumar Tagore, Ramánáth Tagore, Rám Gopál Ghose, Digámber Mittra and others celebrated this pujá in their family dwelling-houses. How far they were morally justified in countenancing this popular festival, it is not for me to say. The fact speaks for itself. Even at the present time, when Hindoo society is being profoundly convulsed by heterodox opinions, not a few of my enlightened countrymen observe this religious festival, and spend thousands of rupees in its celebration. There are, however, a few redeeming features in connection with this annual demonstration which ought to be prominently noticed. First and foremost, it affords an excellent opportunity for the exercise of benevolent feelings;*

* The late Rájá Rájkrishna Báhádur, Babus Sántirám Singhi, Ramdulál De, Shibnáráyan Ghose, Pránkrishna Háldár, the Mallik family, the Ghosál family of Bhukailás and others, spent large sums from

secondly, it materially contributes to the promotion of annual reunions, brotherly fraternization, and to the general encouragement of trade throughout Bengal.

The very great interest which Hindoo women feel in the periodical return of this grand festival, is known to every one who is at all conversant with the existing state of things in this country. In the numerous districts and villages of Bengal, inaugural preparations are made for the celebration of this anniversary rite from the very day on which the Jaggarnath car is drawn in *Assár*, the festival of Ratha Játtrá, that is for about four months before the date of the Durgá-pujá. While the *kumár*, or the image-maker, is engaged in making the bamboo frame-work for the images, the women in the villages devote their time to cleaning and storing the rice, paddy, different kinds of pulse, cocoanuts, and other products of the farm, all which are required for the service of the goddess.

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year to year in giving clothes, food and money to a very large number of poor men, and liberating prisoners from jail by paying their debts. Any relief to suffering humanity is certainly an act of great merit for which the donors deserve well of the community. In our days there are several Babus who do the same on a limited scale, but the name of Babu Táraknáth Parámánik of Kássáripárá deserves special notice. Naturally unassuming and unambitious, his character is as irreproachable as his large-heartedness is conspicuous. On every anniversary of the Durgá-pujá, and on almost every religious celebration, he gives alms to hundreds and thousands of poor people without distinction of caste or creed. On the occasion of the Durgá-pujá festival he does not break his fast until midnight, when he is assured that all the poor people who came to his door have been duly provided with food and coppers. For three nights this distribution of alms continues. The public road before his house is closed by order of the police for the accommodation of beggars. Five or six times in a month he feeds all the poor people that come to his house ; hence the fame of his generosity is spread far and wide, and he is surnamed "the *dátá*," or charitable—a distinction which the more opulent of his countrymen (and there are not a few) might well covet.

Ten times a day they will go to the temple to see what the kumár is doing. Not capable of writing, nor having any idea of 'Letts's Diaries,' they note down in their minds the daily progress of the work, and feel an ineffable pleasure in communicating the glad tidings to each other. When day by day the straw forms are converted into clay figures, and they are for the first time plastered over with chalk and then painted with variegated colors, the hearts of the women leap with joy, and again, when the completed images are being decorated with *dák* ornaments, or tinsel ware, their exhilaration knows no bounds. In the fulness of her anxiety, the mistress of the house considers what more is wanted for the due completion of the pujá and rebukes the master for his apparent neglect somewhat in the following manner: "Where is the *dome sarjah*, (basketware)? Where is the *kumár sarya* (pottery)? Where are the spices and clothes? Where are the *sindurchupri* and sundry other things for the *Barandalá?*" Adding that there is no time to be lost, the pujá is near at hand. The husband acquiescing in what the wife says assures her that everything shall be procured by Saturday or Sunday.

On the first day of the new moon, when every Hindoo in the city becomes more or less busy on account of his official, domestic and religious engagements, the lady of the house is chiefly occupied with making suitable arrangements for *tatwa*, or presents, first to her son-in-law and then to her other relatives,—a subject on which I shall have to say a few words in its proper place. On the eve of the sixth day of the new moon, when the grand pujá may be said to commence, the females, consigning all their past sorrows to oblivion, feel a sort of elasticity, hopefulness, and confidence, which almost involuntarily draw forth from the depths of their hearts, expressions of joy and ecstacy. Even a virgin widow, whose grief is yet fresh, forgets her miseries for a while, and cheerfully mingles in the jubilee. She forms part and parcel of the domestic sisterhood, and for these five days of her life

at least, her settled sadness gives way to joy, and though forbidden by a cruel priesthood to lend her hand to the ceremonial, she nevertheless goes up to the goddess and prays devoutly for a better future. Amidst such a scene of universal hilarity, supplemented by a confident hope of eternal beatitude, it is quite natural that Hindoo women socially divorced from every other innocent amusement, should feel a deep, sincere and intense interest in a national festival which possesses the twofold advantage of a religious ceremony and a social demonstration. None but the most callous-hearted can remain indifferent. Men, women, and children, believers and unbelievers, are alike overcome by the force of this religious anniversary. The females go to the shrine at all hours of the day, and feast their eyes upon the captivating figure of the mighty Durgá and her glorious satellites. Nor do they stare at her with a vacant mind; each has her grievance to represent, her wish to express; prayer in a fervent spirit is offered to the goddess for the redress of the one and the consummation of the other. Should a son die prematurely, should a husband suffer from any difficulty, should a son-in-law be faithless to his wife, should a daughter be doomed to widowhood, the females wrestle hard in prayer for relief and amelioration. On the fourth or Bijayá day, when the image is to be consigned to the river, one takes away a bit of the consecrated *arghi*;* a second, the *khapparer sará*, or sacrificial earthen plate; a third, the crushed betel; a fourth, the sacred *billaw* leaves, and so on; each article forms a sacred trust, and all are preserved with the greatest possible care, as the priceless token of a benignant goddess.

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* An *arghi* is a bunch of durva grass tied up at the last, either with red cotton or a slip of plantain leaf. Two or three of such bundles are made, one is placed on the crown of the goddess and two on her two feet. It is usually stuffed with paddy and besmeared with sandal wood, water, and vermilion. It is a sacred offering, and consequently preserved for solemn occasions.

Having briefly described the main features of this religious festival, I will now endeavour to give a short account of the other circumstances connected with it. In the house of a Bráhman, *Khichri*, rice, dál, fish and vegetable curries, together with sweetmeats and sour milk, are given to the guests, chiefly in the day-time during the three pujá days. Many Hindoos, whose religious scruples will not allow them to kill a goat themselves, go to the house of a Bráhman—but not without an eight-anna piece or a rupee—to satisfy their taste for meat during the pujá. It is very creditable to the women of the sacerdotal class that three or four of them undertake the duties of the *cuisine*, and feed from six to eight hundred persons for three days successively. As fish is not acceptable to Durgá, nor cooked goat's or sheep's flesh, a separate kitchen is set apart for the purpose of cooking the flesh of the sacrificed animals. Bráhman women, as a rule, cook remarkably well. Their long experience in the art, their habitual cleanliness, their undivided attention to their duty, and above all, the religious awe with which they prepare food for the goddess, give quite a relish to every thing they make. Nor is this all. Their devotion and earnestness is so great that they cannot be persuaded to eat any thing until all the guests are fully satisfied; and what is still more commendable, they look for no other reward for their trouble than the fancied approbation of the goddess, and the satisfaction of the guests. Their work is not over till nine o'clock at night; after which they bathe again, change their clothes, say their prayers to the goddess, and then think of appeasing their hunger. Simple and unsophisticated as they are, they are quite content, being mostly widows, with *habishí anna*, which was of yore the food of the Hindoo *rishis*, or saints. It consists of *átab* rice, or rice from unboiled paddy, green plantains and dál, all boiled in the same pot. Of course a large quantity of ghee is added to it, and it is eaten with milk. These Bráhman women are, indeed,

mistresses of the culinary art. If the bill-of-fare is not long, yet the dishes they make are generally very palatable. The truth is, they practically follow the trite saying, "what is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." Their simple recipes always produce appetising and wholesome dishes; and they are thrifty housewives.

In the house of a *Kayastha* or *Sudra*, where the women, it must be observed, are generally more indolent, and the style of living is consequently more luxurious, the food offered to the guests consists chiefly of different kinds of sweetmeats, fruits, *luchis*, vegetable curries, &c. Four or five days before the Pujá begins, professional Bráhman confectioners are employed to make the necessary arrangements at home, the principal ingredients required being flour, *suji*, *chhátlu* (gram fried and powdered), *safeyda* (pounded rice), sugar, spices, almonds, raisins, &c. Not a soul is permitted, not even the master of the house, to touch, much less to taste, these articles * before they are religiously offered to the goddess in the first instance and afterwards to the Bráhmans. In these "feast days" of the Pujá in and about Calcutta, where nearly five hundred *pratimás*, or images, are set up, every respectable Hindoo, as has been observed before, is previously provided at home with an adequate supply of all the necessaries and luxuries of life that will last for a month or so, it being considered unpropitious then to be wanting in any store save fruit and fish. This accounts for the general disinclination on the part of the well-to-do Babus to partake of any ordinary entertainment when visiting the goddess at a friend's house; but to the Bráhmans and the poverty-stricken classes

* Home-made things are, in the long run, cheaper and better than the questionable products of the market, which are not only inferior in quality but are more or less subject to defilement, being exposed for sale to people of all castes. This detracts from the absolute purity of the preparation.

this is a glorious opportunity for "gorging." The despicable practice to which I have alluded elsewhere of carrying home a portion of the *jalpán* (sweetmeat) is largely resorted to on this occasion. It is certainly a relic of barbarism, which the growing good sense of the people ought to eschew.

The night of the ninth day of the increase of the moon is a grand night in Bengal. It is the *nabami ratri*, and modesty is put to the blush by the revelry of the hour. The houses of the rich become as bright as day,—costly chandeliers, hanging lamps, and wall-lights blazing with gas, brilliantly illuminate the whole mansion; while the walls of the *Baitakkháná*, or sitting room, are profusely adorned with English and French paintings and engravings, exhibiting certainly not the best specimens of artistic skill, but singularly calculated to extort the plaudits of the illiterate, who are more easily impressed through the eye than the ear. The rooms and antechambers are frequently furnished in European style. Splendid Brussels or Agra carpets are spread on the floors, a few of which, as if by way of contrast, have the ordinary white cloth spread on them. Nor are hanging Pankhas wanting. In one of the spacious halls sits the Babu of the house, surrounded by courtiers pandering to his vanity. Indolently reclining on a bolster, and leisurely smoking his *álbolá*, with a long winding *nal*, or pipe, half dizzy from the effects of the preceding night's revelry, he does not care to speak much. Like an opium-eater, he falls into a *siesta*, whilst the Pankha is moving incessantly. If an orthodox Hindoo, free from the besetting vice of drinking, and awake to all that is going on around him, before him are placed the Dacca silver-fillagree *átterdán* and *goláppáss*, as well as the *pándán*, with lots of spices and betel in it. On entering the room, the olfactory nerves of a visitor are sure to be regaled with fragrant odours. At intervals rose-water is sprinkled on the bodies of the guests, and weak spiced tobacco is served to them now and again, the current topics of the day forming the subject of

conversation. All this is surely vain ostentation and superfluity. So far, the arrangements and reception of friends are essentially *oriental;* the manner of sitting, the mode of conversation, and the way in which otto of roses, rose-water and betel are given to guests, are Mahomedan and Hindoo-like. But there is something beyond this where orthodoxy is virtually proscribed and heterodoxy parctically proclaimed. While the officiating priests and the female devotees are offering their prayers to the presiding goddess, the Babu, a liberal Hindoo, longs to retire to his *private* room, perhaps on the third story, at the entrance to which a guard is placed to keep off unwelcome visitors, that he may with a few select friends partake of refreshment supplied by an English Purveying Establishment. The room is furnished after the European fashion; chairs, tables, sofas, cheffoniers, cheval-glass, sideboard, pictures, glass and silver and plated-ware, knives, forks and spoons, and I know not what more,—all arranged in proper order, and friends of congenial tastes have free access. First class wines and viands, such as Giesler's champagne, Heatly's port and sherry, Exshaw's brandy No. I, Crabbie's ginger-wine, Bass's best bottled beer, soda-water, lemonade, ice, Huntley and Palmer's mixed biscuits, manilla cigars, cakes and fruits in heaps, *poláo, kurmá, kuptá, kállyá,* roast fowl, cutlets, mutton-chops and fowl-curry,* are plentifully kept; and an

* It may not be out of place to observe here that liberal Hindoos as a body are not beef-eaters as is vulgarly supposed. They are content with fowls, goat, sheep and fish. About forty years ago, before the Calcutta University was founded, the late Baboo Iswar Chandra Gupta, editor of the *Pravakar.* a vernacular newspaper, very cleverly hit off and satirised in popular ballads the then growing desire of the young Hindoo reformers to adopt a European style of eating. He commenced with Rammohan Rai—the pioneer of Hindoo reformation —and thus sarcastically described his public career. Addressing *Saraswatti,* the Hindoo goddess of learning, he thus laments: "O goddess! in vain have you established schools in Calcutta; look at the end of that Rai (Rammohan Rai); profound learning has

English visitor is not an unwelcome guest. *Luchi*, *sandes*, *mitái*, *barfi*, *rasagolla*, *sitavoge*, &c., the ordinary food of the Hindoos on festive days, are at a discount. The Great Eastern Hotel Company should be thankful for the large orders with which the Hindoo aristocracy of Calcutta and its suburbs favor them during this grand festival. The taste for the English style of living is not a plant of recent growth. It has been germinating since the days of John Company, when India merchantmen enjoyed the monopoly of the

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wafted him over the waters to a distant region (England), and never brought him back again." As regards the young alumni, he makes a wife thus accost her husband: "*Prán*, *Prán* (my heart, my heart), you go into society to hear lectures every day; and when the examination is held in the Town Hall, you get prizes; you read heaps, and heaps of books, and always remain outside. Is it written in the books that you should never touch the body of a female? What sort of a *guru* (master) is your Sahib? he is a regular *garu* (bull), if he gives you such lessons. You dislike *luchi* and *monda* (Hindoo sweetmeats), but you get dozens of fowl eggs to satisfy your hunger; and for you all there is death to cows and calves." But this is an exaggeration about the eating of beef by the educated Hindoos. Except a few medical students, who have, in a great measure, overcome their prejudices by the constant handling of dead bodies, the rest still feel a sort of natural repugnance to eating beef. This is perhaps the effect of early impressions produced by the religious veneration in which a cow is held among the Hindoos. "The superstitious reverence," says an eminent writer, "for the ox points doubtless to a period when that useful animal was first naturalized in India and protected by a law for its preservation and encouragement, which, now that the original intention is lost sight of in the lapse of ages, has invested the cattle with a religious character; and, indeed, it is not 200 years since, the Emperor Jehangir was obliged once to prohibit the slaughter of kine for a term of years, as a measure absolutely required to prevent the ruin of agriculture." It is a striking fact that that loathsome disease, leprosy, is very common among the lower orders of Mussulmans who use this meat freely. Perhaps it is more suited to the inhabitants of colder regions than to those of a tropical climate.

foreign trade of the country, when the highest authorities of the land had no scruples as Christians to be present at a Hindoo festival, and when Hindoo millionaires were wont to indulge in lavish expenditure* for the purpose of pleasing their new European masters. Laying aside for a while the dignity and gravity of the clergical profession, the Reverend Mr. Ward was induced out of curiosity to pay a visit to the palatial mansion of the Shoba Bazar Rájás of Calcutta on the last night of the Pujá.

"In the year 1806," says he, "I was present at the worship of this goddess, as performed at the house of Rájá Rájkrishna at Calcutta. The buildings where the festival was held were on four sides, leaving an area in the middle. The room to the east contained wine, English sweetmeats, &c., for the entertainment of English guests, with a native Portuguese or two to

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* So great was the mania for extravagant, ostentatious show, that instances were not wanting in which a lakh of rupees was freely spent on this grand occasion. The late Pránkrishna Háldár, of Chinsurah, in the neighbourhood of Hooghly, expended annually for three or four years the above sum in furnishing his house without stint of cost in truly oriental style, giving rich entertainments to Europeans and Natives, and distributing alms among the poor. There was no railway then, and consequently the boat-hire alone from Calcutta to Chinsurah for English and Native grandees might have cost four to five thousand rupees. The very invitation cards written in golden letters with gold fringes cost eight to ten rupees each. For the entertainment of his English friends he used to give ten thousand rupees to Messrs. Gunter and Hooper, the then grand purveyors of Calcutta. First class wines and provisions were procured in abundance, and arranged in the corridor under European and Mahomedan stewards, while one hundred Bráhmans were engaged in prayers, reciting *Chándi* and repeating the name of the god Madhusudan, for the propitiation of the goddess and the welfare of the family. It sometimes so happened that the clang of knives, forks, and spoons was simultaneous with the sound of the holy bell and conch,—the one neutralising what the other was supposed to produce in a religious point of view.

wait on the visitors. In the opposite room was placed the image, with vast heaps of all kinds of offerings before it. In the two side-rooms were the native guests, and in the area groups of Hindoo dancing-women, finely dressed, singing, and dancing with sleepy steps, surrounded with Europeans, who were sitting on chairs and couches. One or two groups of Mussalman singers entertained the company at intervals with Hindoosthani songs and ludicrous tricks. Before two o'clock the place was cleared of the dancing girls and of all the Europeans except ourselves, and almost all the lights were extinguished, except in front of the goddess,—when the doors of the area were thrown open, and a vast crowd of natives rushed in, almost treading one upon another, among whom were the vocal singers, having on long caps like sugar-loaves. The area might be about fifty cubits long and thirty wide. When the crowd had sat down, they were so wedged together as to present the appearance of a solid pavement of heads, a small space only being left immediately before the image for the motions of the singers, who all stood up. Four sets of singers were present on this occasion, the first consisting of Bráhmans (*Haru Thakur*), the next of bankers (*Bhavanando*), the next of vaishnavas (*Nitái*), and the last of weavers (*Lakshmi*), who entertained their guests with filthy songs and danced in indecent attitudes before the goddess, holding up their hands, turning round, putting forward their heads towards the image, every now and then bending their bodies, and almost tearing their throats with their vociferations. The whole scene produced on my mind sensations of the greatest horror. The dress of the singers, their indecent gestures, the abominable nature of the songs, especially (*khayur*), the horrid din of their miserable drum, the lateness of the hour, the darkness of the place, with the reflection that I was standing in an idol temple, and that this immense multitude of rational and immortal creatures, capable of superior joys, were, in the very act of worship, perpetrating a crime of high treason

against the God of heaven, while they themselves believed they were performing an act of merit, excited ideas and feelings in my mind which time can never obliterate. I would have given in this place a specimen of the songs sung before the image, but found them so full of broad obscenity that I could not copy a single line. All those actions which a sense of decency keeps out of the most indecent English songs, are here detailed, sung, and laughed at, without the least sense of shame. A poor ballad singer in England would be sent to the house of correction, and flogged, for performing the *meritorious actions* of these wretched idolaters.* The singing is continued for three days from two o'clock in the morning till nine."

It is a noteworthy fact that, in those days, when Bengal was in the zenith of its prosperity and splendour, the Governor-General, the Members of the Council, the Judges of the Supreme Court, and distinguished officers and merchants did not think it derogatory to their dignity, or at all calculated to compromise their character as Christians, to honor the Rájás with their presence during this festival. But, since the days of Daniel Wilson, the highly venerated Lord Bishop of Calcutta, who must have expressed his strong disapprobation of this practice, these great men have ceased to attend. At present but a few young officers, captains of ships in the port, and East Indians may be seen to go to these nautches, and, as a necessary consequence of this withdrawal of countenance, the outward splendour of the festival has of late considerably diminished. Seeing the apparent approval of idolatrous ceremonies by some Europeans, a conscientious Christian once exclaimed : "I am not ashamed to confess that I fear more for the continuance of the British power in India, from the encouragement which Englishmen

* "The reader will recollect that the festivals of Bacchus and Cybele were equally noted for the indecencies practised by the worshippers, both in their words and actions."

have given to the idolatry of the Hindoos, than from any other quarter whatever."*

As regards the other amusements at this popular festival, a few words about the Indian *náutch* (dancing) girls may not be out of place here. These women have no social status; their principles are as loose as their character is immoral. They are brought up to this disreputable profession from their infancy. They have no husbands, and many of them have never been married. The Native Princes and Chiefs, rich zemindars and persons in affluent circumstances, the capacity of whose intel-

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* The Reverend Mr. Maurice, a pious clergyman, who had never seen these ceremonies, attempted to paint them in the most captivating terms. Should he think that Hindoo idolatry is capable of exciting the most elevated conceptions about the godhead, and leading the mind to the true path of righteousness, let him come and join the Bráhmans and their numerous devotes in crying "Hari Bole ! Hari Bole ! Jai Durgá ! Jai Kálí !" "Mr. Forbes, of Stanmore Hill, in his elegant museum of Indian rarities, numbers two of the bells that have been used in devotion by the Bráhmans. They are great curiosities, and one of them in particular appears to be of very high antiquity, in form very much resembling the cup of the lotus, and the tune of it is uncommonly soft and melodious. I could not avoid being deeply affected with the sound of an instrument which had been actually employed to kindle the flame of that superstition which I have attempted so extensively to unfold. My transported thoughts travelled back to the remote period when the Bráhman religion blazed forth in all its splendour in the caverns of Elephanta: I was, for a moment, entranced, and caught the odour of enthusiasm. A tribe of venerable priests, arrayed in flowing stoles, and decorated with high tiaras, seemed assembled around me; the mystic song of initiation vibrated in my ear; I breathed an air fragrant with the richest perfumes, and contemplated the deity in the fire that symbolized him." And again, in another place: "She (the Hindoo religion) wears the similitude of a beautiful and radiant cherub from Heaven, bearing on his persuasive lips the accents of pardon and peace, and on his silken wings benefaction and blessing." What strange hallucinations some of these Christian ministers labour under in attempting to reconcile the ideas of idolatry with those of the True and Living God!

lect is as narrow as its culture is scanty, have been their great patrons. Devoid of a taste for reading and writing, they manage to drive away the *ennui* of their lives by the songs of these dancing girls. Great were the rewards which these girls sometimes received at the hands of the Native Kings in their palmy days. Even when a principality groaned under extravagance and financial embarrassment, these bewitching girls were entertained at considerable expense to drown the cares of statecraft and kingcraft. Even the most astute prince was not free from this courtly profligacy. Though these girls often basked in the sunshine of royal favor, yet there was not a single *Jenny Lind* among them, either in grace or accomplishment. As regards their income, a girl has been known to refuse ten thousand rupees for performing three nights at the Nazim's Court. When Rájá Rájkrishna of Sobhá Bazár, the Singhi family of Jorasanko, and the De family of Simla, celebrated these Pujás with great pomp, dancing girls of repute were retained a month before the festival at great cost, varying from 500 to 1,000 rupees each for three nights. Now that those prosperous days are gone by, and the big English officials do not condescend to attend the nautch, the amount has been reduced to fifty rupees or a little more. Their general attire and gestures, as well as the nature and tendency of their songs, are by no means unexceptionable. These auxiliaries to sensual gratification, combined with the allurements of Bacchus, even in the presence of a deity, are far from being fitted to animate or quicken devotional feelings and prayerful thoughts.

Theatrical performances from the popular dramas of the Indian poets, and amateur *Játtrás*, pantomimical exhibitions, also contribute largely to the amusement of the people. The old *Biddaya Sunder, Manvanjan, Daksha Yajna;* and others of a similar character, are still relished by pleasure-seekers and holiday-makers. It is, however, one of the healthy signs of the times that native gentlemen of histrionic taste have recently

got up amateur performances, which bear a somewhat close resemblance to the English tragedies and comedies.

Having previously described all the important circumstances and details, religious and social, connected with this popular festival, I will now give a short account of the *Bhásán* or *Niránján*, which takes place on the tenth day of the new moon, or in the fourth day of the Pujá. It is also called *Bíjayá*, because the end of a ceremonial is always attended with melancholy feelings. This is the day when the image is consigned to the water, either of a river or a tank. Apart from its religious significance, the day is an important one to English and Native merchants alike. Although all the public offices, Government and mercantile, are absolutely closed for twelve days, agents of Manchester and Glasgow firms must open their places of business on this particular day, which to native merchants and dealers is an auspicious day, and large bargains of piece-goods for present and forward delivery are made. Ten to fifteen lakhs of rupees worth of articles are sold this day in three or four hours, the general impression being that such bargains bring good luck both to the buyer and to the seller.

About eight o'clock in the morning, the officiating priest begins the service, and in half an hour it is over. Music, the indispensable accompaniment of Hindoo Pujás, must attend every such service. A small looking-glass is placed on a pan of Ganges water, and every inmate of the family, male or female, is invited to look at the image of the goddess reflected from its surface. Deeply imbued as the minds of the votaries are with religious ideas, every individual looks into the mirror with a sort of devotional feeling, and expresses his conviction as to the reality of the representation. The children, more for amusement than from faith, hang about the place ; but the women steadfastly cling to the panoramic view, quite unwilling to leave it. The scene naturally recalls to their mind the emotions they felt when leaving the paternal roof for the

father-in-law's house. "*Má Durgá* is going to her father-in-law's, and will not return for another twelve-month," exclaims one. "Look at her eyes, her sorrowful countenance," ejaculates another. "The temple will look wild and desolate when *Má Durgá* goes away," adds a third. To console them, the mistress of the house exhorts all to offer their prayers to the goddess, beseeching that she may continue to vouchsafe her blessings from year to year, and give prolonged life and happiness to all concerned. With this solemn invocation, they all fall down on their knees before the goddess, whose spirit had departed on the day previous, and in a contemplative mood implore her benediction. Before retiring, however, every one takes with her some precious relic of the offerings (flowers or *billapattra*) made to Durgá when her spirit was present, and preserves it with all the care due to a divine gift, using it religiously in cases of sickness and calamity.

About three in the afternoon, after washing their bodies and putting on new clothes and ornaments, the women make preparations for performing the last farewell ceremony in honor of the goddess. The sadar (main) door is closed; the musicians are ordered to go out into the streets; the Durgá with all her satellites is brought out into the area of the temple, the *barandálá* with all its sundries is produced, and the women whose husbands are alive begin to turn round the images and touch the forehead of each with the *barandálá*, repeating their prayers for lasting blessings on the family. To the inexpressible grief of the widows, who are present on the occasion, a cruel custom has long since debarred them from assisting in this holy work. These ill-fated creatures are doomed only to stare at the images, but are not permitted to take an active part in the ceremonial. Is it possible to conceive a more gloomy picture of society than that which absolutely deprives a human being of all share in a religious privilege, the exercise of which, though under a mistaken faith, tends to sweeten a wretched life? The miserable widows of India,

are unhappily destined to pine away their existence, until greater leaders of native reform arise to deliver them from the galling fetters of superstition.

The epilogue which closes the parting ceremony is called the *kanakánjali.* It consists in a woman (not a widow) taking a small brass plate of paddy and *durva* grass, with a rupee dyed in red lead in it, and throwing it from before the image right over its head into the cloth of a man who stands behind for the purpose of receiving it. This last offering, it is needless to say, is preserved with the greatest care. The woman who performs the rite is an object of envy. This rite being performed, each of the women takes a bit of the sweetmeat and betel which has been *last* offered to *Má Durgá.* A sudden reaction of feeling takes place, all hearts are grieved, and some even shed tears. Two feelings, though not exactly analogous, arise in their minds; first, the devotional spirit, vividly recalling the unceasing round of ritualistic ceremonies as well as the festivity and gaiety that the presence of the goddess naturally enough produced, and which are about to vanish and disappear within an hour by the immersion of the goddess in the river or pond; and second, a more worldly feeling, like that which arises when a mother sends away her daughter to the house of her father-in-law. In either case, the tender heart of a Hindoo woman readily breaks down under the pressure of grief.

The goddess is afterwards brought out and placed on a bamboo stage borne on the shoulders of a set of coolies; all the flowers and *billapattra* offered her during the past three days are also put into a basket, and taken to the riverside. The procession moves slowly forward, preceded by bands of English and Native musicians, and the necessary retinue of servants and guards; while from within the house, the women, not satiated with the sight of the goddess for one long month, stretch their eyes as far as their sight can reach to catch a last farewell glimpse of her. The streets of Calcutta, the English

part of the town excepted, become literally crammed and almost impassable on such a day. Groups of Police constables are posted here and there to maintain peace and order; the streets become a pavement of heads. At the lowest calculation, there cannot be less than 100,000 sight-seers abroad. Men, women, and children of all classes and ranks come from a great distance to have a sight of the image. The tops of houses, the verandahs, the main roads,—nay, the unfrequented corners,—present a thick mass of living creatures, all anxious to feast their eyes upon the matchless grandeur of the scene. A foreigner, unaccustomed to such a magnificent spectacle, is apt to overrate the wealth and prosperity of the people on such a day. The number of images, the dazzling and costly embellishments with which they are decorated, the rich livery of some of the servants, the bands of musicians preceding the procession, the letting off of red and blue lights at intervals, the gala dress of the multitude, and last but not least, the elegant carriages of the big "swells," and the still more elegant attire of their owners, who loll back on the cushion of the carriages, diffusing fragrant odours as they pass, cannot fail to produce an imposing effect. Here a gaily clad Babu with his patent Japan-leather shoes; there a Hindoostani dandy with his massive gold necklace and valuable pearls hanging down from his ears; here a proud Mogul in all the bravery of cloth of gold; there a frowning Mussalman with his dazzling cap and gossamer *chápkán* (tunic), and ivory mounted stick, all combine to present a motley group of characters, national in their costumes, and unique in appearance. The poor country-woman, her lord and children, though not favored by fortune, still do their best to look gay.

Those Hindoos who have adorned their images regardless of expense parade them through the most densely crowded streets till eight in the evening—vanity being their chief motive; while those who move in humbler spheres of life, take them to boats on the river hired for the purpose, and throw them into

the water amidst shouts of exultation. The mob, of course, sing obscene songs and dance indecently, all which is tolerated for the occasion. The growing sense of the people—the result of English education—has now-a-days greatly diminished the amount of indecency which was one of the distinguishing characteristics of such an occasion in former days.

Between seven and eight o'clock in the evening, the assembled crowds begin to disperse in joyous mood, talking all the way as to the respective superiority of such and such images. Amongst such a great number and variety, there is sure to be difference of opinion, but it is soon settled by the affirmation of a wise head that "the spirit of the goddess is the same in all the images; *Má Durgá* does not mind show."

When the worshippers and others return home, they go at once to the *thakurdálán*, where the officiating Bráhman is waiting to sprinkle on their bodies the sacred water; all are made to sit down on the floor, with their feet covered with their clothes, lest a drop should fall upon them. The Bráhman, with a small twig of mangoe leaves, sprinkles the water, repeating at the same time the usual incantation, the meaning of which is that health, wealth, and prosperity may attend the votaries of *Durgá*, from year to year. After this they write on a piece of green plantain leaf the name of the goddess several times, and then clasp one another in their arms, and take the dust off the feet of all the seniors, with the mutual expression of good wishes for their worldly prosperity. An elderly man thus blesses a boy: "may you have long life, a gold inkstand and a gold pen, acquire profound learning and immense wealth, and support lakhs of men." To a girl he thus pronounces his benediction (there being no clasping of arms between a man and a woman, nor between a woman and a woman), "may you enjoy all the blessings of a married life (*i. e.*, never become a widow), become the mother of a *rájá* (king), use vermilion on your grey head, continue to wear the iron bangle, have seven male children, and never know want."

It is well known that no blessing is more acceptable to a Hindoo woman than that she should never become a widow, because the intolerable miseries of widowhood are most piercing to her heart; nor can it be otherwise so long as human nature remains as it is. This social institution of the Hindoos, of cordially embracing each other and expressing all manner of good wishes on a particular day of the year, when all hearts are more or less affected with grief at the departure of the goddess, is a very commendable one. It has an excellent tendency to promote social reunion, good fellowship, and brotherhood. Not only all the absent friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbours, male and female, join in this annual greeting; but even strangers and the most menial servants are not forgotten on the occasion. Every heart rejoices, every tongue blesses, every acrimonious feeling is consigned to oblivion. This is a "quiet interval at least between storm and storm; *interspaces* of sunlight between the breadths of gloom; a glad voice on summer holidays, happy in unselfish friendships, in generous impulses, in strong health, in the freedom from all cares, in the confidence of all hopes." During such a happy period "it is a luxury to breathe the breath of life."

To drown their sorrows in forgetfulness, the Hindoos use on this particular occasion a slightly intoxicating beverage made of hemp leaves. Every one that comes to visit—and there must be a social gathering—or is present, is treated with this diluted beverage and with sweets. Even the most innocent and simple females are for once in a year allowed to use it, but very sparingly. One farthing's worth of hemp leaves, or about one ounce, suffices for fifty persons or more, so that it becomes almost harmless when so copiously diluted. But those who have imbibed a taste for English wines and spirits always indulge freely on this occasion, giving little heed to temperance rules and lectures. It is "*Bijayá*," and drinking to excess is thought justifiable.

It would not be proper to close this subject without saying

a few words about the national excitement which the approach of this festival produces, and the powerful impetus it gives to trade in general. It has been roughly estimated that upwards of a crore of rupees (£1,000,000) is spent every year in Bengal on account of this festival. Every family, from the aristocracy to the peasantry, must have new clothes, new shoes, new every thing. Men, women, children, relatives, poor acquaintances and neighbours, nay beggars, must have their holiday dress. Persons in straitened circumstances, who actually live from hand to mouth, gather their hard-earned savings for a twelvemonth to be spent on this grand festival. Famished beggars who drag a miserable existence all their lives, and depend on precarious alms to keep their body and soul together all the year, hopefully look forward to the return of this anniversary for at least a temporary change in their rags and tatters. Hungry Bráhmans, whose daily avocation brings them only a scanty allowance of rice and plantains, cheerfully welcome the advent of "*Má Durgá*," and gratefully watch for the day when their empty coffers shall be replenished. Cloth merchants, weavers, braziers, goldsmiths, embroiderers, lace - makers, mercers, haberdashers, carpenters, potters, basket - makers, painters, house-builders, English, Chinese and Native shoemakers, ghee, sugar and corn-merchants, grocers, confectioners, dealers in silver and tinsel ware, singers, songsters, musicians, hackney - carriage keepers, Oorya bearers, hawkers, pedlars and such dealers in miscellaneous wares,—all look forward to the busy season when their whole year's hopes shall be realized by lots of rupees flowing into the till. To men of practical experience in business matters, as far as the metropolis of British India is concerned, it is well known that because of the Durgá-pujá the "Trades" make *more* in one month than they can possibly make in the remaining eleven months. From the first week in September to the middle of October, while the Pujá preparations are being actually made by the Hindoos,

when they, frugal as they assuredly are, once in a twelvemonth loosen their purse strings, when the accumulated interest on Government securities is drawn, when all the arrears of house rent are peremptorily demanded, when remittances from distant parts of the country arrive, when, in short, rupees, annas and pice are circulating freely among the people, the shopkeepers make all the display of their goods they can. From sunrise to ten o'clock at night the influx of customers continues unabated; extra shops are opened and extra assistants employed; the shopkeepers themselves have scarcely leisure enough to take a hasty meal a day; and each day's sales swell the heart of the owner. The thrifty and economical Provincial, who loves money as dearly as the blood that warms his heart, leisurely makes his sundry purchases before the regular rush of customers begins to pour in. He has not only the choice of a large assortment, and the "pick" of the new stock, but gets the benefit of a reasonable price, because the shopkeeper is not hard and tenacious in the early stage of the Pujá sale. As each day passes, and novelties are exposed for public inspection, the shopkeeper raises his prices with the increasing demand. The effeminate and extravagant Babu of the City, who does not worship Mammon half so devoutly as his country brother, does not mind paying a little too much for his "whistle," because he is large-hearted and liberal-minded. His more frequent intercourse with Englishmen has taught him to look upon money as "filthy lucre." He is not calculating, and hence he defers making his purchases till the eleventh hour, when, to use a native expression, "the shopkeeper cuts the neck with one stroke."

About one-fifth of the Hindoo population of Calcutta consists of people that are come from the contiguous villages and pergannas of the Presidency Division. These men live in Calcutta solely for employment, keeping their families in the country, where they have generally small farms of their own, which yield them enough produce in the shape of rice, pulse,

cereals, vegetables, &c., to last them throughout the year, leaving, in some instances, an ample surplus stock, with which and a few milch cows as well as tanks, they husband their resources with the greatest frugality, and enjoy every domestic comfort and convenience. They do not care for David Wilson's biscuits and sponge-cakes, or a glass of raspberry ice-cream or Roman punch on a summer day; their bill-of-fare is as short and simple as their taste is primitive. These men make their Pujá-purchases much earlier than their brethren in the city, because they have to start for home as soon as the public holidays commence, on the eve of the fourth day of the increase of the moon. If the Indian railways have benefited one class of the people more than another, it is these men who should be thankful for the boon. If the East Indian and Eastern Bengal Railway Companies' passenger receipts for two days are properly examined, *viz.*, the fourth and fifth days of the new moon, or the beginning of the Durgá-pujá holidays, they will certainly exhibit an incredibly large amount of receipts from third-class carriages. Indeed, it has been rather facetiously remarked by the towns-people, that Calcutta becomes much lighter by reason of the exit of country-people during the Durgá-pujá holidays; but then the return of Calcutta people to their home from the mofussil should be also taken into account. On a fair calculation, the outgoing number far exceeds the in-coming proportion. It should also be observed that the purchases of the former embrace a greater variety of items than those of the latter. Their mothers, wives, daughters and sisters, not to speak of the male members of the family, being absent in the country, the wants of each and every one must be supplied. Articles for domestic consumption in a Hindoo family are in the greatest requisition. Looking-glasses, combs, *áltá*, *sindur* or China vermilion, *ghunsi* (strings worn round the loins), scented drugs for ladies' hair, black powder for the teeth, soap, pomatum, otto of roses, rose-water, wax candles, *sindurchubry* (toilet-

box lined with small shells), silk, thread, wool, carpets, spices of all sorts both for chewing and cooking, betel-nuts, cocoanut-oil for ladies' hair, sugarcandy, almonds, raisins, Cabul pomegranates, Dacca, Santipore and English made *dhuties*, *uránis* (sheets), *sáris* (lady's skirts), silk handkerchiefs, silk cloth, Benares embroidered cloth, satin and velvet caps, lace, hose, tinsel ornaments for the images, English shoes and sundries, constitute the catalogue of their purchases. This explains their going into the Bázár early, and accounts for their extra expenditure on the score of luxuries and superfluities of life; but the reader should bear in mind that such extravagance is indulged in only once a year. Generally deserving of praise as these people are for their frugal, simple and abstemious habits, an annual departure from the established rule is not unjustifiable. The rich classes, as will be evident from what has been said, spend enormous sums in making their fashionable purchases on this occasion.

From the foregoing details it is easy to infer that the Durgá-pujá anniversary presses heavily on the limited resources of a Hindoo family. A rich man experiences little difficulty in meeting his expenses, but the middling and the humbler classes, who comprise nine-tenths of the population, are put to their wits' end to make both ends meet. They are sometimes obliged to solicit the pecuniary aid of their richer friends to enable them to get over the *Durgá* difficulty. It is, perhaps, not generally known that before this popular festival, when all Bengal is in a state of social and religious ferment, when money must be had by fair means or foul, not a few unfortunate men, chiefly libertines and rakes, deliberately commit fraud by forging cheques, drafts, and notes, which eventually lead them into the greatest distress and disgrace. Notwithstanding the high price of clothes and of all descriptions of eatables, every family must have a month's provision to carry them through the period during which no more money will be forthcoming.

I had almost forgotten to say anything about the annual gratuity which the Bráhmans of Bengal obtain on the occasion of this festival. From time immemorial, when orthodox Hindooism was in the ascendant, the Bráhmans have not only advanced their claims to all the offerings made to gods or goddesses, small or great, but they have established a rule that every Hindoo, whose circumstances would permit it, should give them individually some *Bársik* (annuity) at the return of this festival. Every respectable Hindoo family, even now-a-days when heterodoxy is rampant in all the great centres of education, has to give few rupees to Bráhmans. Rich families give much more. So very tenacious are the Bráhmans of this privilege that even if they earn one hundred rupees a month by other employment, they will not forego a single rupee once a year on this occasion, but claim it as a birthright.

These men have studied human nature, but they have built their hopes of permanent gain on the weak foundation of a hollow superstition, which is destined, through the progress of enlightenment, inevitably to fall into decay. It is too late to retrieve the huge blunder of laying a false foundation for their gains.

IX.

THE KALI-PUJA FESTIVAL.

IN Bengal, next to the Durgá-pujá in point of importance stands the Kálí-pujá, which invariably takes place on the last night of the decrease of the moon, in the month of Kártik (between October and November). Kálí is represented as standing on the breast of her husband, Shiva, with her tongue protruding to a great length. She has four arms, in one of which she holds a scimitar; in another, the head of a giant, whom she has killed in a fight; the third hand is spread out for the purpose of bestowing blessing, while, by the fourth, she welcomes the blessed. She also wears a necklace of skulls, and has a girdle of hands of giants round her loins. To add to the terrific character of the goddess, she is represented as a very dark female with her locks hanging down to her heels. The reason ascribed for her standing on the breast of her husband, is the following: In a combat with a formidable giant called Rackta Bija, she became so elated with joy at her victory that she began to dance in the battle-field so frantically, that all the gods trembled and deliberated what to do in order to restore peace to the earth, which, through her dancing, was shaken to its foundation. After much consultation, it was decided that her husband should be asked to repair to the scene of action and persuade her to desist. Shiva, the husband, accordingly came down; but seeing the dreadful carnage, and the infuriated countenance, as well as the continued dancing of his wife, who could not in her frenzy recognize him,

he threw himself among the dead bodies of the slain. The goddess was so transported with joy that, as she danced, she inadvertently stepped upon the breast of her husband, whereupon the body moved. Struck with amazement she stood motionless for a while, and fixing her gaze upon him, at length discovered that she had trampled on her husband. The sight at once restored her feminine modesty, and she stood aghast, feeling shocked at the unhappy accident. To express her shame, she bit her tongue, and in that posture she is worshipped by her followers.

Her dark features, the dark night in which she is worshipped, the bloody deeds with which her name is associated, the countless sacrifices relentlessly offered at her altar, the terrific form in which she is represented, the unfeminine and warlike posture in which she stands, and last but not least, the desperate character of some of her votaries,—all these invest her name with a terror which is without a parallel in the mythological legends of the Hindoos. The authors of the Hindoo mythology could not have invented in their fertile imagination a character more singularly calculated to inspire terror* and thereby to extort the blind adoration of an ignorant populace. About seven hundred years ago, a devoted follower of this goddess, named Agam Bágish, proclaimed that her worship should be performed in the following manner: The image is to be made, set up, worshipped and destroyed on the same night. It is to be a *nishi*, or midnight, pujá, on the darkest night of the month, so that not a single soul from outside may know it. He strictly observed this rule while he was alive; and it was said that Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai of Krishnaghar followed his example for some time.

* "The image of Minerva, it will be recollected, was that of a threatening goddess, exciting terror. On her shields she bore the head of a gorgon. Sir William Jones considers Kálí as the Proserpine of the Greeks."

Babu Abhai Charan Mitra, of Calcutta, and Bhawani Charan Mukerji, of Jessore, also tried to observe the rule prescribed above, but it is said the spirit of secret devotion soon forsook them. They reverted to the general practice of worshipping the goddess on the darkest night in Kártik, inviting friends and making pantomimic exhibitions.

Though her pujá lasts but one night, the sacrifices of goats, sheep and buffaloes are as numerous as those offered before the altar of Durgá. In former times, when idolatry prevailed universally throughout Bengal, and the religious belief of the people was firm and unshaken, the splendour with which the worship of this goddess was performed was second only, as I have remarked, to that of Durgá. Both goddesses, however, still continue to count their votaries by millions. "The reader may form some idea," says Mr. Ward, "how much idolatry prevailed at the time when the Hindoo monarchy flourished, from the following circumstance, which belongs to a modern period, when the Hindoo authority in Hindoostan was almost extinct. Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai, and his two immediate successors, in the month of Kártik, annually gave orders to all the people over whom they had a nominal authority to keep the *Shyamá* festival, and threatened every offender with the severest penalties on non-compliance. In consequence of these orders, in more than ten thousand houses in one night, in the Zilla of Krishnaghar, the worship of this goddess was celebrated. The number of animals destroyed could not have been less than ten thousand."

Kálí, like Durgá, Shiva, Vishnu, and Krishna, is the guardian deity of many Hindoos, who daily offer their prayers to her both morning and evening. Several, who possess great wealth and know not how to employ it better, dedicate temples to her service and enrich them with ample endowments. In the holy City of Benares, there still exists a Kálí shrine, where hundreds of beggars are daily fed at the expense of the founder, the late Ráni Bhabáni of Nattore. Nearly a hundred

and fifty years ago, Rájá Rámkrishna erected a temple at Barranagore, about six miles north of Calcutta, in honor of this goddess, and spent upwards of a lakh of rupees when it was first consecrated. He endowed it with a large revenue for its permanent support, so that any number of religious mendicants who might come there daily could be easily fed. In his prosperous days, this rich zemindar paid an annual revenue of fifty-two lakhs of rupees to the East India Company. Unfortunately the family has since been reduced to a state of poverty, and the temple is a heap of ruins. The endowment, like most other endowments of this nature, disappeared soon after the death of the founder. The Rájá of Burdwan's endowment of this kind still endures, and promises to enjoy a longer lease of life.

The name of Kálí, be it observed, is more extensively used than either that of Durgá or Shiva. Whenever a Native Regiment is to march or set out on an expedition, the stereotyped acclaim is,—"*Kálí Maikey Jaí*," "victory to mother Kálí." When the evening gun is fired in any of the military stations, the almost involuntary exclamation is, "*Jaí Kálí Kalkátá-walí.*" It is said that Sevajee, the founder of the Mahratta power, never set out in any expedition or journey without invoking the aid of Bhabáni (another name of Kálí). Nor is her worship less universal than her fame. On the last night of the decrease of the moon in Kartik, every family in Bengal must worship her, though in a somewhat different shape. Every family, rich or poor, Bráhman or Sudra, must celebrate the Lakshmi or Kálí Pujá before the sacred *Reck* of *Dhân* or paddy, which, in the estimation of a Hindoo is a valuable heritage.* Several incidents connected

* A *Reck* is a small round basket, with which Natives measure rice, —the staff of life in Bengal. Every family has its sacred *Reck* of paddy. which is preserved with religious care and brought out on such special occasions.

with this religious festival are worth recording. In the Upper and Central Provinces, as in the South of Hindoostan, it is called the *Dewali* Festival. Though the image is not set up, yet the Hindoo and Parsi inhabitants observe the holiday by opening their new year's account on that day. Illuminations, fireworks, and all sorts of festivities mark the day. To try their luck for the next year, almost all Hindoo merchants and bankers indulge in gambling that night, and large sums are sometimes at stake on the occasion. In Calcutta, where gambling is strictly prohibited, the law is shamefully violated on that dark night. This does not imply any reflection on the vigilance of the Police, because the game is carried on surreptitiously. The Parsi merchants, who deal in wines and stores, throw open their shops and treat their European customers free of cost on that particular day. Their brethren in Bengal are, however, not so liberal to their customers, simply because it is not their new-year's day. In Calcutta, and all over Bengal, the night is remarkable for illuminations,* fireworks, feasting, carousing and gambling. There is a time-honoured custom among the people to light bundles of *paykati* or faggots, that night. As is naturally to be expected, the children take a great delight in such pastimes. At the close of the Pujá a servant of the house takes a *kulo*, or winnowing fan, and a stick with which he beats and sings "bad luck out" and "good luck in."†

* A superstitious idea prevails among the Hindoos that, unless they illuminate their houses on this particular night, devils will come and take possession of them. In the Upper and Central Provinces it is customary with the Hindoo inhabitants not only to illuminate but to whitewash their houses and decorate the doors and walls of their shops with colored China paper, so that every thing may look *smart* according to Native taste. In the Jubbulpore District, I have seen the poorest laborer whitewash the mud walls of his tiled hut with one farthing's worth of white earth. called *Sewmattee*, which is found in great abundance in that part of the country.

† One Joy Ghosh, a notorious buffoon, was once asked by his old mother to perform this rite. Joy, instead of reciting the motto in

Kálí is also the guardian deity of thieves, robbers, *thugs* and such like desperate characters. Before starting on their diabolical work, they invoke her aid to protect them from detection and punishment. The supposed aid of the goddess arms them with courage, and leads them to commit the most atrocious crimes. When successful, they come and offer to her sacrifices of goats, spirituous liquors and other things, under an impression that the superintending power of the goddess has shielded them from all harm. But the unbending rigor of the British law has almost entirely dissipated the delusion. Many an infamous dakait in Bengal has confessed his guilt on the scaffold, lamenting that *Má Kálí* had not protected him in the hour of need. The notorious Rugho Dakait of Hughly, whose very name terrified a wayward child into sleep, made fearful disclosure as to the originating cause of his numerous crimes. Some forty years ago there lived in Calcutta a very respectable Hindoo gentleman, who was a very great devotee of this goddess. Every month, on the last night of the decrease of the moon, he, it was said, used to set up an image of this goddess, and adorned her person with gold and silver ornaments to the value of about one thousand rupees, which were afterwards given to the officiating priest. On the annual return of this grand pujá in the month of Kártik, he used to give the goddess a gold tongue, and decorate her four arms with divers gold ornaments, to the cost of about three thousand rupees, and his other expenses amounted to another six or seven thousand. For a number of years he continued to celebrate the pujá in this magnificent style, his veneration becoming more intensified as his wealth increased, He established a Bank in Calcutta

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the right way, purposely inverted it just to irritate the old lady. The joke was too much for the sensitive mother; she beat her breast, tore her hair, and refused to be consoled until the son repeated the song in proper order, *i. e.*, "bad luck out. good luck in." Trifling with *Lakshmi*, the goddess of prosperity, is the height of folly. It is punished with misery here and perdition hereafter.

called the "India Bank," which circulated notes of its own to a considerable amount. A combination was formed among a few influential Natives, whose names I am ashamed to mention, and a well concocted system of fraud was organized. Through his son-in-law Company's paper, or Government securities, to the amount of about twenty lakhs of rupees were forged and passed off as genuine on the public. But as fraud succeeds for a short time only, the gigantic scheme was soon discovered, and the delinquent was tried, convicted, and sentenced to transportation for life to one of the Penal Settlements of the East India Company, where he lived for several years to rue the consequences of his iniquitous conduct. His eldest son told the writer that his father concealed in a wall of one of the rooms of his house Bank notes for upwards of a lakh of rupees. When the search of the Police was over, he opened the part of the wall, and to his utter disappointment found all of the notes crumbled to pieces, and reduced to a small bundle of rotten paper, of no earthly use to any one. Thus was iniquity rightly punished. No wonder that the deep faith of the Babu in the goddess Kálí did not avail him in the hour of danger. His flagitious career commenced by a blind devotion to his guardian deity, culminated in a gigantic forgery, and closed with transportation and infamy.

There exists a temple of this goddess in the suburbs of Calcutta, which has long been celebrated for its sanctity. The place is called Kálí Ghát, about four miles south of Government House. It is not exactly known when this temple was first built. The most probable conjecture is, that some three hundred years ago a shrewd and far-seeing member of the sacerdotal class, observing the great veneration in which the goddess was held among the Hindoos of those days, erected a temple to the image and gave the place a name after her, the renown of which, as Calcutta grew in importance, gradually spread far and wide. To perpetuate the holy character of the shrine, and to consecrate it by traditional sanctity, the fol-

lowing story was given out, in the truth of which the generality of the orthodox Hindoos have a firm belief. Once upon a time, when Sátí (Durgá) destroyed herself, Shiva, her husband, placing the dead body on his *trisul* (a 3-pronged weapon) swung it in a frantic state owing to his sad bereavement, till the entire body rotted and fell into 52 different places. These places are held sacred by the Hindoos; and in each of these places stand the shrines of Kálí and Shiva. In Kálí Ghát, it is said, one of her fingers fell on the spot where the temple now stands and in whose recess the priests pretend that the relic is still preserved. Hence the sacred character of the shrine, which still attracts thousand of devotees every year from all parts. In popular estimation, from a religious point of view, it does not yield much to the Jagannátha of Orissa, the Bisveswar of Benares, the Krishna of Brindaban, the Gyasur of Gya, or the Mahadeva of Baddinath. Fortunately situated in close proximity to the metropolis of British India, and until recently in the immediate neighbourhood of the highest Appellate Court (Sadar Dewanni Adalat), independently of its bordering on the *Adigangá* (the original sacred stream of the Ganges), this temple has always drawn the wealthiest and the poorest portions of the Hindoo community. Had the offerings in gold and silver and in kind fallen to the share of one priest, it is not too much to say that he would long before this have been as rich as the Jagat Set (Banker of the world) of Murshedabad, who was reputed to have been worth upwards of fifteen *crores* of rupees.

Wealthy Hindoos, when on a visit to Kálí Ghát, expend large sum of money on the worship of this goddess, in the shape of valuable ornaments, silver plate, dishes, &c., sweetmeats and food for a large number of Bráhmans, and small presents to thousands of beggars, besides numerous sacrifices of goats, sheep and buffaloes, which make the space before the temple swim with blood. The flesh of the goat and the sheep is freely used by the *sákta* class of Hindoos when offered to

Kálí and Durgá; but they would never use it unless after such an oblation. It is otherwise called *britha*, or unsanctified flesh, which is altogether unfit for the use of a religious Hindoo. But the progress of English education has made terrible inroads on the religious practices of the people, at least of the rising generation.* The following description of the Kálí or *Shayamá-pujá* given by Mr. Ward will serve to convey to the reader some idea of the nature of the festival.

"A few years ago," says he, "I went to the house of Kálí Sankar Ghosh at Calcutta, at the time of the Shayamá festival, to see the animals sacrificed to Kálí. The buildings where the worship was performed were raised on four sides, with an area in the middle. The image was placed at the north end with the face to the south; and the two side-rooms, and one of the end rooms opposite the image, were filled with spectators: in the area were the animals devoted to sacrifice, and also the executioner, with Kálí Sankar, a few attendants, and about twenty persons to throw the animal down and hold it in the post, while the head was cut off. The goats were sacrificed first, then the buffaloes, and last of all, two or three rams. In order to secure the animals, ropes were fastened round their legs; they were then thrown down, and the neck placed in a piece of wood fastened into the ground and open at the top like the space betwixt the prongs of a fork. After the animal's neck was fastened in the wood by a peg which passed over it, the men who held it pulled forcibly at the heels, while the executioner, with a broad heavy axe cut off the head at one blow; the heads were carried in an elevated posture by an attendant (dancing as he went), the blood running down him on all sides, into the presence of the goddess. Kálí Sankar, at the close, went up to the execu-

* Young Bengal is no longer satisfied with Kálí Ghát meat; his taste being improved and his mind disabused, he must needs have kid and mutton from the new Municipal market, which is certainly superior in quality to that of Kálí Ghát.

tioner, took him in his arms, and gave him several presents of cloth, &c. The heads and blood of the animals, as well as different meat offerings, are presented, with incantations, as a feast to the goddess, after which clarified butter is burnt on a prepared altar of sand. Never did I see men so eagerly enter into the shedding of blood, nor do I think any butchers could slaughter animals more expertly. The place literally swam with blood. The bleating of the animals, the numbers slain, and the ferocity of the people employed, actually made me unwell, and I returned about midnight, filled with horror and indignation." In the foregoing account, Mr. Ward has omitted to say anything about the nocturnal revelry with which the festival is in most instances accompanied. I have witnessed scenes on such occasions, which are too disgusting to be described. Not only the officiating priest and the spiritual guide, but all the members of the family and not a few of the guests partake of the spirituous liquors offered to the goddess, and in a state of intoxication sing *Ramprasadi* songs befitting the occasion. The festival closes with orgies such as are observed in the worship of Bacchus. There are, however, a few persons, honorable exceptions to the rule, who, though they perform the worship of this goddess, yet altogether abstain from drinking. The goddess Káli is their guardian deity, they worship her daily, but are known never to touch a drop of wine. They attribute to her all the worldly prosperity they enjoy, and look to her for everlasting blessedness. Such men have no faith in the common drunken motto, "*Bhárey má Bhabáni.*" "Mother *Bhabáni* (another name of Kálí) is in the cup." But the grand characteristic of this and similar festivals is, as I have already mentioned, "the wine, the fruit, and the lady fair."

"Even *bacchanalian* madness has its charms."

But to return to the priests of Kálí Ghát. As time rolled on, their descendants multiplied so rapidly that it soon became necessary to allot a few days only in the year to each of the families; and on grand occasions, which are not a few, the

offertories are proportionally divided among the whole set of the sacerdotal class. Thus it has now become a case of what a Hindoo proverb so aptly expresses : "The flesh of a sparrow divided into a hundred parts," or infinitesimal quantities.

God has so constituted man that he can find little or no enjoyment in a state of inactivity. The proper employment of time, therefore, is essentially necessary to the progressive development of our powers and faculties, the non-exercise of which must needs induce idle and vicious habits. No bread is sweet unless it is earned by the sweat of our brow. The Haldars (priests) of Kálí Ghàt, having no healthy occupation in which to engage their minds, and depending for their sustenance on a means which requires neither physical nor mental labor, have inevitably been led to adopt the Epicurean mode of life, which says, "eat, drink and be merry." This habit is further confirmed by the peculiar nature of the religious principles which the worship of this goddess enjoins. Certain texts of the Tantra Shastra expressly inculcate that, without drinking, the mind is not properly prepared for religious exercise and contemplation. The pernicious effects of such a monstrous doctrine are sufficiently obvious. It has been said that not only the men but the women also are in the habit of drinking. As a necessary consequence, the vicious practice has not only enervated their minds but made their "wealth small and their want great." Disputes often arise between the worshippers and the priests of the temple respecting the offerings and the proper division of the same, the latter often claiming the lion's share which the former are unwilling to yield. Gross lies are sometimes told in the presence of the goddess in order to secure the major portion of the offerings in the interests of the worshippers—an expedient which the notorious rapacity of the officiating Bráhmans imperatively demands. Surrounded by an atmosphere densely impregnated with the miasm of a false religion and a corrupt morality, the ennobling thought of the true God and the moral accountability of man never enters

their minds. The chief end and aim of their life is to impose on the credulity of their blind votaries, and thereby pander to their own unhallowed desires and selfish gratification. Nor can they rise to a higher and purer sphere of life, because from their childhood they have been nurtured in the cradle of error, ignorance, indolence, and profligacy. Who can contemplate the effects of their impure orgies on the eighth, ninth, fourteenth, and fifteen nights of the increase and decrease of the moon, without being reminded of the saturnalia of the Greeks? * If a sober-minded man were to visit the holy shrine of Kálí Ghát on one of these nights, he would be shocked at the unrestrained debauchery that runs riot in the name of religion. The temple, no less than the private domicile of the priests, presents an uninterrupted scene of bacchanalian revelry, which is unspeakably abominable. Men without shame, and women without decency or morality, mingle in the revels; and the result is, that all the cherished notions of the better part of humanity are at once put to flight. It is painful to reflect that, notwithstanding

* The writer remembers to have been once in his younger days taken up on a Kálí-pujá night by a gang of infamous drunkards in the very heart of Calcutta. When he was returning home about midnight in company with some of his friends after seeing the *támáshá*, he being the youngest of the lot lagged behind; to his utter dismay he was suddenly laid hold of by a man who smelt strongly of liquor, and carried hurriedly into an empty house at the roadside. The first shout at the very threshold was,—"here we have got a *moori*," *i. e.*, a victim. The ruffians, who had their faces concealed, jumped up at the announcement, and one of them accosted him in the following manner—"what money have you got?" The writer replied, "a few annas pice only." "No rupees?" asked another; whereupon they all fell to searching his person, and stripped him of all his clothes, which consisted of a *dhuti*, a *chadar* and a *jamá*, and finally bade him go. He was obliged to return home almost in a state of nudity, one of his friends lending him a *chadar* for the occasion. In these days the introduction of gas-light and the posting of constables in the street have greatly checked such ruffianism.

the progress of enlightenment in the great centre of Indian civilization, people still cling to the adoration of a blood-thirsty goddess and to the support of a depraved class of priests. At Chitpore, a populous village about four miles north of the Government House, there existed a temple of Kálí, where, according to popular and uncontradicted tradition, the largest number of human sacrifices was offered to the goddess before the establishment of the British Government. A corresponding temple of Kálí stands in front of the great and dilapidated temple in Baugbazar, Calcutta, and many a human sacrifice has been offered at the shrine of Sidheswari Debí, as it is called. But the Chitpore temple was by far the most renowned for the number of its human victims.

The meat of goats that are daily sacrificed before the altar of Kálí being too numerous for local consumption, are sold to outside-customers much in the same manner as fruits and vegetables are brought from the neighbouring villages into the market. On Saturday the sale is larger than on the other week-days, because that night is specially dedicated to the worship of Bacchus, Sunday affording a respite from work. But the sale of Kálí Ghát goat-meat has of late been much interfered with by the establishment of rival shrines in several parts of Calcutta, where meat can be had much cheaper. The owners (mostly prostitutes and drunkards) of these pseudo-goddesses, vulgarly called *Kasháye* or butcher* Kálí, sacrifice every morning, without any ceremony, one or two goats, except on Saturday, when the number is increased according to requirements. Thus a regular and profitable butcher's trade is openly carried on in the name of the goddess; and the generality of the *Sákta* Hindoos feel no religious scruples in using the meat which is thus sanctified. The comparative

* This name is very appropriate, those places being to all intents and purposes, slaughterhouses and butcher's shops; the placing of image of Kálí therein is simply a blind to evade municipal laws.

ease with which flesh is now obtained in Calcutta has tended, in no small degree, to encourage habits of drinking among a race of men, proverbially abstemious, it being the popular impression that meat neutralises the effects of spirituous liquors.*

Many images of Kálí which have from time to time been set up in and about Calcutta, ostensibly for religious but actually for secular purposes, in imitation of the unrivalled prototype at Kálí Ghát, have acquired unenviable celebrity, and have been made a source of income to the owner and the officiating priests, who fatten on the offerings made to the goddess in the shape of money and provisions. Thus, for instance, the *Sidheswarí*, or Kálí of Nimtolla, Calcutta, obtains a few rupees daily from such Hindoos as are carried to the river-side to breathe their last, besides the small presents made at all hours of the day, especially in the mornings and evenings, when the crowd assembles. It is amusing to observe the complaisance with which a Bráhman gives a consecrated *Billa-pattra*, or flower, to a devotee in return for a rupee or so. A shrewd Bráhman, like the ancient Roman soothsayer, laughs in his sleeve at such stupidity.

A Sanskrit proverb says that a meritorious work endures. It keeps alive the name of the founder; and thus vanity furnishes the strongest stimulus to the endowment of works of a

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* This idea is strengthened by the opinion of Native medical students, many of whom, it is a matter of regret, are not great advocates of temperance. Natives use liquor not for health, but solely for intoxicating purposes. A very successful Native Practitioner, to whom not only the writer but many of his respectable friends are under great obligation, not long ago fell a victim to the besetting vice of intemperance, and, like a penitent sinner, confessed his guilt in his dying moments. His reputation was so great at one time that it was said "patients felt half-cured when he entered the room." In the beginning of his brilliant career, he was one of the most staunch advocates of temperance. How frail is human nature!

religious character and of public utility. It is, however, a painful fact that the nature and character of such endowments is, in most cases, lamentably wanting in the element of permanence. Two or three generations after the death of the founder, the substance of the estate being impaired, the family is reduced to a state of poverty; the surviving members, often a set of demoralised idlers, depend for their support on the usufruct of the *Devatra*, originally set apart for exclusively religious purposes, and placed beyond the reach of law. In these days the offshoots of many families are absolutely dependent on this sacred fund for their subsistence, and the consequence naturally is, that the endowment is frittered away and the work itself inevitably falls into decay. Thus, in process of time, both the fund and the founder's name pass into utter oblivion.

The following account given by Mr. Ward of the death of a devotee of this goddess will not be uninteresting:—"In the year 1809, Trigoona Gosvami, a vyuktavudhootu, died at Kálí Ghát in the following manner: Three days before his death, he dug a grave near his hut, in a place surrounded by three *vilwu* trees which he himself had planted. In the evening he placed a lamp in the grave, in which an offering of flesh, greens, rice, &c., to the shakals was made, repeating it the next evening. The following day he obtained from a rich native ten rupees worth of spirituous liquors, and invited a number of mendicants, who sat drinking with him till twelve at noon, when he asked among the spectators at what hour it would be full moon; being informed, he went and sat in his grave, and continued drinking liquors. Just before the time for the full moon, he turned his head towards the temple of Kálí, and informed the spectators that he had come to Kálí Ghát with the hope of seeing the goddess, not the image in the temple. He had been frequently urged by different persons to visit the temple, but though he had not assigned a reason for his omission, he now asked what he was to go and see there: a

temple? He could see that from where he was. A piece of stone made into a face, or the silver hands? He could see stones and silver anywhere else. He wished to see the goddess herself, but he had not, in this body, obtained the sight. However, he had still a mouth and a tongue and he would again call upon her; he then called out aloud twice, "Kálí? Kálí?" and almost immediately died;—probably from excessive intoxication. The spectators, though Hindoos (who in general despise a drunkard), considered this man as a great saint, who had foreseen his own death, when in health. He had not less than four hundred disciples."*

The various causes which have hitherto conspired to impart a sanctity to this famous temple are gradually waning in their influence; but it will be a very long time before the minds of the mass of the people are completely purified in the crucible of true religion before which superstition and priestcraft must vanish into air.

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* For an account of the *Bámáchari* sect, see Note D.

X.

THE FESTIVAL OF CAKES.

ON the annual commemoration of this popular festival in Bengal, which is analogous to the English "Harvest home," the people in general, and the agricultural classes in particular, manifest a gleeful appearance, indicative of national demonstrations of joy and mirth. It takes place in the Bengali month of *Paus*, or January, following immediately in the wake of the English Christmas and New year's day. With the exception of the upper ten thousand, almost all men, women, and children alike participate in the festivities of the season, and, for three successive days, are occupied in rural pastimes and gastronomical enjoyment. The popular cry on this occasion, is—"*Aowni Bowni tin din pitta bhât khawni*," "the *Paus* or *Makar Sankrânti* is come, let three days be passed in eating cakes and rice," accompanied by a supplementary invocation to the goddess of Prosperity (Lakshmí) that she may afford her votaries ample stores, so that they may never know want. As the outward manifestation of this internal wish, all their chests, boxes, bedding, the earthen cooking-pots in the kitchen, as well as those in the store-house containing their food-grains, and in fact every moveable article in the house, are tied with shreds of straw that they may always remain intact. The origin of this festival is involved in obscurity, but tradition says that it sprang from the general desire of the people engaged in agricultural pursuits, to celebrate the last day of *Paus*, and the

two succeeding days, in eating what they most relish, cakes of all sorts, to their hearts content, after having harvested and gathered their corn and other food-grains, which form the main staff of their life. Whatever may have been the origin of this festival, it is evident that it does not owe its existence, like most other Hindoo festivals, to priestcraft. The idea is good, and the tendency excellent. After harvesting and gathering the fruits of their labour, on which depends not only their individual subsistence throughout the year, but the general prosperity of the country by the development of its resources, the husbandmen are well entitled to lay aside, for a short while, the ploughshare, and taking three days' rest, to spend them in rural amusements and festivities amid their domestic circle. All this tends, in no small degree, to awaken and revive dormant feelings of love and friendliness by the mutual exchange of invitations as well as of good fellowship. Their incessant toil in the field during the seven previous months, their intense anxiety on the score of weather, carefully noting, though not with the scientific precision of the meteorological reporter, deficient and plenteous rainfall, and apprehending the destructive October gale, when the ears of corn are almost fully developed, their constant watchfulness to prevent theft and the destruction of the crops by the cattle, their unceasing weeding-out of troublesome and useless plants and *cassay* grass, sometimes wading in marshy swamp or mire knee-deep, and their incessant anxiety for the due payment of rent to the zemindar, or perhaps of interest to the relentless money-lender,—all these are sources of uneasiness that do not allow them a moment's peace of mind. Should they, by way of relaxation, cease to work for three days in the year, they cannot be blamed for laziness or supineness. The question of a good harvest is of such immense importance to an agricultural country like India, that when the god Ram Chandra, the model king, visited his subjects in Oude, the first thing he asked them was about the

state of the crops; and when the enquiry was favourably answered, his mind was set at rest, and he cheerfully unfolded to them the scheme of his future government.* Physically considered, temporary cessation from labor is indispensable to recruit the energy of the exhausted body, and to promote the normal vigor of the mind. So, in whatever light this national jubilee is regarded,—socially, morally or scientifically,—it is productive of beneficial results, ultimately contributing to the material prosperity of the land.

Some of my countrymen of a fastidious taste look upon this festival as a puerile and foolish entertainment, because it possesses no dignified feature to commend it to their attention; but they should consider that it is free from the idolatrous abominations and rank obscenity by which most of the Hindoo festivals are characterised, independently of its having a tendency to promote the innocent mirth and general hilarity of the masses, whose contentment is the best test of a good government and of a generous landed aristocracy.

So popular is this festival amongst the people that the Mussalmans have a common saying to the effect, that their *Eed*, *Bakriédé* and *Shobebarát*—three of their greatest national festivals—are no match for the Hindoo *Paus Sakrant.*

Our children and women in the city, whose minds are so largely tinctured with an instinctive regard for all festivities,

* Indeed, it has become a byword among the Natives in general that the compound word "*Ram-Rajya*," or the empire of Ram, is synonymous with a happy dynasty. There existed peace and harmony among the people in the infancy of society. Almost every family had its assigned plot of land which its members cultivated, and the fruits of which they enjoyed without the incubus of a rack-renting system, because the virgin soil always afforded an abundant harvest. The wants of the people were few and were easily supplied. In fact, there was a complete identity of interests between the rulers and the ruled. The result was universal contentment and happiness. But unhappily the present advanced stage of social organization has considerably impaired the relation.

share in the general excitement. On this occasion, exchanges of presents of sweetmeats, clothes, jaggery, ghee, flour, oranges, cereals, cocoanuts, balls of concentrated milk, vegetables, spices, sugar, almonds, raisins, etc., are made between relatives in order that they may be enabled to solemnise the cake festival with the greatest *éclat.* In respectable families, the women cheerfully take the trouble of making these preparations, instead of trusting them to their female cooks, because male cooks are no adepts in the art. So nicely are these cakes made and in such variety, that the late Mr. Cockerell, a highly respected merchant of this City, used every year to get an assortment from his Babu and invite his friends to partake of them ; and notwithstanding the proverbial differences of taste, there are few who would not relish them.

The second day of the cake festival being also *Makar-sankranti,* the day in which goddess *Gangá* condescended to come down from heaven to this nether world for the purpose of delivering Sagar-rájá with his family, is annually kept up splendidly by the boys of the pátshálás, or primary schools, around Calcutta. The more advanced form themselves into a band of singers, and, attended by bands of musicians, with all the usual accompaniments of flags, staves, etc., and led by their master, proceed in procession from their respective schools to the bank of the river Bhagirathi, singing rhythmically in chorus all the way in praise of the holy stream and of her powers of salvation in the present *Kálí Yuga,* or iron age. When they reach their destination, they pour forth their songs most vociferously. They afterwards perform the usual ablutions, and return home in the same manner as they set out from the pátshálá, regarding the performance as an act of great merit.

XI.

THE SARASWATI PUJA.

SARASWATI is the Hindoo goddess of speech and learning. She is represented as seated on a waterlily and playing on a lute. Throughout Bengal her worship is celebrated with more or less pomp on the fifth day of the increase of the moon, in the Bengali month of Magha or Falgoon (February). As the popular Shástras reckon the commencement of spring from this date, the people, especially the young and gay of both sexes, put on yellow (*bassanti*) garments, and indulge in all sorts of low merriment, manifesting a depraved and vitiated taste.

Every Hindoo, young or old, who is able to read and write, observes this ceremony with apparent solemnity, abstaining from the use of fish on that day as a mark of reverence to the goddess. The worship is performed either before an image of the goddess, or before a pen, ink-bottle, and *puthi* (manuscript), which are symbolically regarded as an appropriate substitute for the image. The officiating priest, after reading the prescribed formula, and presenting rice, fruits, sweetmeats, flowers, &c., directs the votaries of the goddess to stand up with flowers in their hands and repeat the usual service, beseeching her to bestow on them the blessings of learning, health, wealth, good luck, longevity, fame, &c. Apart from its idolatrous character, it is rather a strange sight to see a number of youths, after going through the process of ablution and changing their clothes, stand up before the goddess in a body, and in a devotional spirit address her in prayer for the blessings above enumerated. Even apart from its superstitious character, it is decidedly objectionable on the score of its purely secular

tendency, as it makes no allusion whatever to the primary object of all prayer, *viz.*, the atonement and pardon of sin and the salvation of the soul—an element in which the religious ceremonies of the Hindoos are singularly deficient.

> "Life is real, life is earnest,
> And the grave is not its goal;
> 'Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'
> Was not spoken of the soul."

It was reported of Sir William Jones, that when he studied Sanskrit, he used to place on the table a metal image of this goddess, evidently to please his Pandit. Let it not be inferred from this that he advocated the continuance of idolatry; far from it, but even in appearance to acquiesce in homage to an idol made of clay and straw is to withhold from the Most High the reverence, gratitude and obedience due to Him alone. The early formation of a prayerful habit divested of any idolatrous feature will always exercise a healthy religious influence on the mind in maturer years.

In every *chatuspáti*, or school, the Bráhman Pandit and his pupils worship this goddess with religious strictness. The Pandit sets up an image, and invites all his patrons, friends, and acquaintances on this occasion. Every one who attends must make a small present of money in the shape of *pronámi* to the goddess, and returns home with the hollow benediction of the Bráhman. To so miserable a strait have the learned Pandits been reduced of late years, that they anxiously look forward to this festival as a small harvest of gain to them, the authorized ministers of the goddess. They make from fifty to one hundred rupees a year by the celebration of this Pujá, which keeps them for six months; should any of their friends fail to make the usual present to the goddess, they are sure to come and demand it as a right.*

* A gift once made to a Bráhman must be repeated from year to year till the donor dies; in some cases it is tenable from one generation to another.

As a mark of homage to the goddess, the Hindoos do not read or write on that day. Hence the day is observed as a holiday in public and mercantile offices, where the clerks are mostly Hindoos. Should any necessity arise they write in red ink, as all the inkstands in the household are washed out and placed before the goddess for annual consecration. They are, however, not prevented from attending to secular business on this occasion. Unlike the sanguinary Pujás of Durgá and Kálí, no bloody sacrifices are offered to this gentle goddess, but as regards rude merriment, it is no better than the others. Revelry and unbecoming mirth are the grand characteristics of this as indeed of almost every Hindoo festival. It is sickening to reflect how indecency and immorality are thus unblushingly countenanced under the sacred name of religion.

Loose women celebrate this festival, and keep up dancing and singing all night in a beastly state of intoxication, to the utter disgust of all sober-minded men. The Mahárája of Burdwan used to expend large sums of money on this occasion, engaging the best dancing girls of the metropolis, and illuminating and ornamenting his palace in splendid style, besides giving entertainment to his English and Native friends. Vast multitudes of people from Calcutta still resort to his palace, and admire the profuse festoons of flowers and the yellow appearance of everything, indicative of the advent of spring,—a season which, according to the popular notion, invites the mind to indulge in licentious mirth. It is needless to enumerate farther the many obscenities practised in songs and actions on this occasion.

The day following the pujá, the women are not permitted to eat any *fresh* prepared article of food, but must be satisfied with stale, cold things, such as boiled rice and boiled pease with a few vegetables, totally abstaining from fish, which they cannot do without on any other day. Taking place on the sixth day of the increase of the moon, this part of the festival is called *Sital Shasthí*, as enjoining the use of cold food.

XII.

THE HOLI FESTIVAL.

THE annual return of this festival in honor of the god Krishna excites the religious feelings and superstitious frenzy of the Hindoos not only in Bengal but also in Orissa, Bombay, and in the Upper Provinces of India. From time immemorial it has continued to exercise a very great influence over the minds of the people at large, so much so that what the Durgá-pujá is in the Lower Provinces of Bengal, the Holi festival is in the Upper Provinces, being by far the most popular and demonstrative in all its leading features. Though originally and essentially a Hindoo festival of a religious character, dedicated to the worship of a Hindoo god, it has subsequently assumed a jubilant phase, drawing the followers of a different creed to its observance; hence not a few Mussalmans in Upper India observe it in a secular sense, quite distinct from its religious aspect or requirements.

In Bengal it is called *Dole Játtrá*, or the rocking of the image of Krishna on its throne. It occurs on the day of the full moon in the Bengali month of Falgun or March, at the vernal equinox,—a season of the year when all the appetites, passions and desires of the people are supposed to be more or less inflamed, and they naturally seek outlets of gratification. In the Upper Provinces it is known by the name of *Holi*, or festival of scattering *phág*, or red powder, among friends and others. On the previous night the people, both here and in the Upper Provinces, burn amidst music the

effigy of an uncouth straw image of a giant named Maydhasoor, who caused great disturbance among the gods and goddesses in their hours of meditation and prayer. To put a stop to this unholy molestation, the god Narayan, or Krishna, destroyed the giant by means of his matchless valor and skill, and thus restored peace in heaven as well as on earth. To commemorate this glorious achievement, the image of the above giant is annually burnt on the night previous to the *Holi* festival.

The religious part of the ceremony, irrespective of its idolatrous element, is performed in accordance with the original rules of the Hindoo ritual, which were free from all kinds of abominations. But the great body of the people, lacking the vital principle of a pure and true faith, and following the impulse of unrestrained appetites, have gradually sunk into the depths of corruption,—the outcome of impure imaginations and of a vitiated taste. In Bengal, the observance of this festival is not characterised by anything that is violently opposed to the social amenities of life. Notwithstanding the many phases and multitudinous requirements of the Hindoo creed, the peculiarities of this festival are mainly confined to the worship of the household image, and the entertainment of the Bráhmans and friends. Daubing the bodies of the guests with red powder, either in a dry or in a liquid state, and singing songs descriptive of the sports of Krishna with the milk-maids in the groves of Brindában, form the constituent elements of the festival in Bengal. Offerings of rice, fruits, and sweetmeats are made to the god; and the idol is also smeared with red powder by the officiating priest, so as to render it one with that of its worshippers. At the close of the ceremony, the rite of purification is performed, which restores the image—either a piece of stone or of metal—to its normal purity. It is a noteworthy fact that, in this festival, no *new* image made of clay and straw is either set up or thrown into the sacred stream, as is invari-

ably the case with the other Hindoo gods and goddesses worshipped by the people of Bengal.

Krishna, in whose honor this festival is celebrated, has many forms, one of which generally constitutes the household deity that is worshipped every morning and evening by the hereditary priest with all the solemnity of a religious service. A Hindoo who keeps an image of this god is more esteemed in a religious point of view than one who is without it. In popular estimation he escapes many censures to which a godless Hindoo is often exposed. Nor is this at all singular. An orthodox Hindoo who offers up his daily prayer to his tutelary deity is at least more consistent in his principles, which, as Confucius very justly says, means Heaven, than one who is tossed about by a wavering faith in the indistinguishable whirl of life.

The festival of Dole Játtrá or Holi, in Bengal varies, however, in its observance as to the day on which it is to be held. Some celebrate it on the first, some on the second, and some again on the third, fifth, seventh, ninth day of the dark phase of the moon. It is generally the Vaishnavas, or the followers of Krishna, that observe it; though, in some cases, the Sáktas, —the followers of Durgá and Kálí—also celebrate it. No bloody sacrifices are offered on the occasion. Apart from the religious merit attributed to the ceremonial, it is comparatively a tame and undemonstrative affair in the Lower Provinces of Bengal when compared with the sensational excitement with which it is celebrated in the Upper Provinces. In Orissa too it is kept up with great *éclat* before the shrine of Jagannátha and in its environs. Thousands and tens of thousands of pilgrims from a great distance congregate there on this occasion and offer their oblations to the "stumped" lord of the world. When the inhabitants of Bengal talk of their most popular festivals, they name almost involuntarily the *Dole* and the *Durgátsub*, but the latter has long since completely eclipsed the former. Morally, socially and intellec-

tually the enlightened Bengalis are assuredly the Athenians of Hindoostan. Their growing intelligence and refined taste, —the outcome of English education—have imbued them with a healthier ideal of moral excellence than any other section of the Indian population throughout the length and breadth of the land, the Parsis of Bombay excepted. It is owing to the influence of this superior moral sense that they do not abandon themselves to the general corruption of manners obtaining in Upper India during the *Holi* festival.

"Fools make a mock at sin" is a scriptural proverb which is especially applicable to the inhabitants of the Upper Provinces on the annual return of this festival. Unlike their brethren in Bengal, they pay greater attention to the secular than to the religious part of the ceremony. A few days before the *Holi*, as if to enkindle the flame of a national demonstration of a sensational character, they return to the low, obscene old ballads which constitute a notable feature of the ceremonial. Week after week, day after day, and hour after hour, they pour them out almost as spontaneously as a bird, because they have a perverse propensity for the indulgence of impure thoughts, and rude, profane mirth, which is an outrage on common decency and a scandal to a rational being. Notwithstanding the vigilance of the Police and the stringency of the Penal Code, these ruffians stroll along the public streets in bands, dance antics and sing obscene songs with impunity, simply because the major portion of the Native constables come from the same lower strata of society. Of course, before a European they dare not commit the same nuisance. Should a luckless female, even old and infirm, chance to come in their way, they unblushingly assail her with a volley of scurrilous and insulting epithets much too gross to be tolerated by a rational being having the smallest modicum of decorum about him. To give a specimen of the songs, vulgar as they unquestionably are, would be an act of unpardonable profanation. Even in the Burra Bazar

of Calcutta, where the Up-country Hindoos mostly reside, excesses and enormities are committed, even in the full blaze of day, which alike belie reason and conscience, and ignore the divine part of humanity. Mirth, music and melody do not form the programme of their amusement, but a feverish excitement, originating in lust and leading to criminal excesses, is the characteristic of the scene. If a sober-minded man were permitted to examine the cash-book of a country-liquor shop, he would most assuredly be struck with the enormous receipts of the shopkeeper during the festive days on this occasion. Bacchanalianism, in all its most detestable forms, reigns rampant in almost every home and purlieu throughout the Upper Provinces. Every brothel, every toddykhannah, every grog-shop, is crowded with customers from early morn to dewy eve, and later on. An almost incessant volume of polluted and polluting outcries rises to the skies from these dens of sin, smirching and vulgarising the bright ideal of a holy festival. The endless chanting of obscene songs, the discordant notes of the inebriated singers almost tearing their throats in excessive vociferations, the harsh din of music, their frightful gesticulations and contortions of the body, their frantic dance, their dithyrambic fanaticism in which every sense of decorum is lost, their horrid looks rendered tenfold more horrid by reason of their smearing their bodies with red powder, the pestiferous atmosphere by which they are encompassed, and their reeling posture and bestial intoxication,—*all* show how the "fools make a mock at sin."* Nor is this to be wondered at. The lives and examples of the Hindoo gods

* When the late Mr. Thomason, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces, visited Benares, the far-famed city of holy shrines and holy bulls, during this festival, he exclaimed in pious indignation, "what disgusting scenes are enacted and frightful crimes perpetrated in the name of religion by rational beings, capable of purer and sublimer enjoyments. Surely the shameless ragamuffins are fit subjects for bedlam."

have, in a great measure, moulded the character of their worshippers: "Shiva is represented as declaring to Lakshmí that he would part with the merit of his works for the gratification of a criminal passion; Brahmá, as burning with lust towards his own daughter; Krishna, as living with the wife of another, murdering a washerman and stealing his clothes, and sending his friend Yudhisthira to the regions of torment by causing him to utter a falsehood; Indra and Chandra are seen as the paramours of the wives of their spiritual guides." It is much to be lamented that the authors of the Hindoo mythology have unscrupulously held up the revels of their gods to the imitation of their followers.

It is but just to observe that the more respectable classes are restrained by a sense of decency from openly participating with the populace in the vicious indulgence of undisciplined passions. But their implied approval of such sensual gratifications tends, in no small degree, to fan the flame of superstitious frenzy. If they do not expose themselves in the highway, they betray their concupiscence within the confines of their own dwellings. They substitute opium and bhang (hemp) for spirituous liquors; and among the females of the house, some aunt or other is the butt of their rude unseemly satire. Their lusts and want of inward discipline, stimulated by a false religion as well as by the demoralized rules of an erroneous conventionalism, have deadened, as it were, their finer sensibilities; and generations must pass away before they are enabled rightly to appreciate their social relations and their moral and religious duties.

XIII.

CASTE.

THE word 'caste' is derived from the Portuguese word *casta*—mould, race, etc. To trace the origin of the Indian caste in all its varied phases, it is necessary, as Dr. J. Wilson says, that we should go back to a very remote period when the Aryans, after crossing the Hindu Kush, had settled themselves in India. The aboriginal tribes, differing in manners and usages from those of the Aryans, were treated, as a matter of course, with contempt, while in return they had looked upon their more powerful conquerors with envy and jealousy. Thus the wide gulf generated in the hearts of the conquerors and the conquered ultimately led to the institution of caste. But to account for the different varieties of the caste-system, the explanation is to be found in the different manners and customs then prevailing amongst the aborigines and the Aryans. The Aryans were of a very sensitive sort of people. Anything new they did not like. To ensure a steady progress in arts and manufactures, in science and literature, they allotted certain functions to certain castes.

The distinction of caste is woven into the very texture of Hindoo society. In whatever light it is considered,—religiously, morally, or socially,—it must be admitted that this abnormal system is calculated to perpetuate the ignorance and degradation of the race among which it prevails.

"It is dishonouring alike to the Creator of man, and injurious to man—the creature. It is emphatically the curse of India and the parent of India's woes. It is the great enemy of

enlightenment and improvement and advancement in India. It is the very soul and the body of Hindooism, and its inevitable tendency is to sap the very foundation of a common brotherhood in the human family and dry the perennial spring of common sympathy. Though in every sense of the word an anti-social institution, it is nevertheless the main support of the Hindoo religion. Take away this support, and you destroy the very life and vitality of that religion. It is an extraordinary social phenomenon that this arbitrary distinction in humanity has been brought to the most pernicious development in India amidst the unwonted processes of national degeneracy. Its evil doings of late have moved earth below and heaven above and hell beneath. It interferes with all the relations and events of life, and with what precedes and follows, and what is supposed to precede and follow life. It reigns supreme in the innumerable classes and divisions of the Hindoos, whether they originate in family descent, in religious opinions, in civil or sacred occupations, or in local residents, and it professes to regulate all their interests, affairs and relationships. It is the guiding principle of each of the classes, and divisions of the Hindoos in their distinct and associated capacity. It is the condensation of all the pride, jealousy, and tyranny of an ancient and predominate people dealing with the tribes which they have subjected, and over which they have ruled, often without the sympathies of a recognized common humanity. Caste was a growth, pride being its seminal principle—pride of races, and the pride of religious presumption and pre-eminence issuing in arrogant monopoly."

It is obvious that it must have originated in a dark age when a proud and selfish priesthood, in the exercise of its sacerdotal functions, imposed on the people this galling yoke of religious and social servitude. Even the rulers of the land were not exempt from its baneful influence. They were as much subject to the prescribed rules of their order as the common people. Calculating on the implicit and unquestioning obedience of

men to their authoritative injunctions, a scheming hierarchy established a universal system, the demoralizing effects of which are perhaps without a parallel in the annals of human society. The capacity and culture of man's intellect were shamefully under-estimated, when it was expected that such an artificial order, so preposterously unsuited to the interests of humanity and to the advancement of civilization, should for ever continue to influence the life and destiny of unborn generations.

"The distinctions of rank in Europe," says Mr. Ward, "are founded upon civic merit or learning, and answer very important ends in the social union; but this system commences with an act of the most consummate injustice that was ever perpetrated; binds in chains of adamant nine-tenths of the people, debars them for ever from all access to a higher state, whatever their merits may be; puts a lock upon the whole intellect of three of the four orders, and branding their very birth with infamy, and rivetting their chains for ever, says to millions and millions of mankind,—'you proceeded from the feet of Brahmá, you were created for servitude.'"

History furnishes no parallel to such an audacious declaration made in utter defiance of the fundamental principles of humanity. The onward march of intellect can never be checked, even when opposed by the strongest of artificial barriers. Still will that "grey spirit" rise and chase away the errors which age has accumulated and superstition cherished.

> "That grey spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

The distinction of caste was originally instituted to secure to the hierarchy all the superior advantages of a privileged class, and to condemn all other orders to follow menial occupations such as the trades of the country could furnish. They kept the key of knowledge in their own hands, and thus exercised a domineering influence over the mass of

the people, imagining that their exclusive privileges should have endless duration. This power in their hands was "either a treasury-chest or a rod of iron." The mind recoils from contemplating what would have been the state of the country, the extent of her hopelessness and helplessness, if the light of European knowledge had not dawned and penetrated the Hindoo mind, and thereby introduced a healthier state of things. Eighty years back this system was at the zenith of its splendour; men clung to it with all the tenacity of a natural institution, and proscribed those who ventured to break through its fetters. It was a terrible thing then to depart from the established order of social union; the least whisper of a deviation and the slightest violation of its rules were visited with social persecution of the worst type. I cannot do better than give a few instances, illustrating the nature of the punishments to which a Hindoo was subjected in that period of terror, when the caste-mania raged most furiously.

"After the establishment of the English power in Bengal, the caste of a Bráhman of Calcutta was destroyed by a European, who forced into his mouth flesh, spirits, &c. After remaining three years an outcast, great efforts were made, at an expense of eighty thousand rupees, to restore him to the pale of his caste; but in vain, as many Bráhmans of the same order refused to associate with him as one of their own. After this, an expense of two lakhs of rupees more was incurred, when he was readmitted to the privileges of his caste. About the year 1802, a person in Calcutta expended in feasting and presents to Bráhmans fifty thousand rupees in order to be readmitted into the ring of his caste from which he had been excluded for eating with a Bráhman of the *Pirâli* caste. Not long after this, two *Pirâli* Bráhmans of Calcutta made an effort to wipe out the opprobrium of *Pirâlism*, but were disappointed, though they had expended a very large sum of money.

"Ghanesyama, a Bráhman, about thirty-five years ago,

went to England and was excommunicated. Gakul, another Bráhman, about the same time went to Madras, and was renounced by his relatives: but, after incurring some expense in feasting Bráhmans, he was received back. In the year 1808, a blacksmith of Sirampur returned from Madras, and was disowned by his fellow caste-men; but, after expending two thousand rupees amongst the Bráhmans, he was restored to his family and friends. In the same year the mother of Káli Prosad Ghosh, a rich *Kayasto* of Benares, who had lost caste by intercourse with Mussulmans, and was called a *Piráli*, died. Káli Prosad was much concerned on account of the rites required to be performed in honor of the manes of his deceased parent; but no Bráhman would officiate at the ceremony. After much entreaty and promise of rewards, he prevailed at last upon eleven Bráhmans to perform the necessary ceremonies at night. A person who had a dispute with these Bráhmans informed against them, and they were immediately abandoned by their friends. After waiting several days in vain, hoping that his friends would relent, one of these Bráhmans, tying himself to a jar of water, drowned himself in the Ganges. Some years ago, Rám, a Bráhman of Tribani, having, by mistake, married his son to a *Piráli* girl, and being abandoned by his friends, died of a broken heart. In the year 1803, Shibu Ghosh, a *Kayasto*, married a *Piráli* girl, and was not restored to his caste till after seven years, and after he had expended seven thousand rupees for the expiation of his offence. About the same period, a Bráhman woman of Velupookuria having been violated, and in consequence outcasted, put an end to her existence by voluntary starvation. In the village of Baj-Baj, some years ago, a young man who had lost his caste through the criminal intrigues of his mother, a widow, in a state of frenzy poisoned himself, and his two surviving brothers abandoned the country. Guruprasád, a Bráhman of Charna, in Bardwán, not many years ago, through fear of losing caste, in consequence of the infidelity

of his wife, left his home and died of grief at Benares. About the year 1800, a Bráhman lady of Santipur murdered her illegitimate child, to prevent discovery and loss of caste. In the year 1807, a Bráhman of Tribany murdered his wife by strangling her to avert loss of caste through her criminal intrigues. About the year 1790, Kálidas, a Bráhman, who had been inveigled into marrying a washerman's daughter, was obliged to flee the country to Benares, where, being discovered, he sold all his property and fled, and his wife became a maniac. In the time of Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai, a Bráhman of Santipur was found to have a criminal intrigue with the daughter of a shoemaker: the Rájá forbade the barber of the village to shave the family, or the washerman to wash for them: in this distress they applied to the Rájá, and afterwards to the Nawab for restoration, but in vain. After having been despoiled of their resources by the false promises of pretended friends, the Rájá relented and removed the ban, but the family have not obtained to this day their pristine position.*

"Numbers of outcasts abandon their homes and wander about till death. Many other instances might be given in which the fear of losing caste has led to the perpetration of the most shocking murders, which in this country are easily concealed, and thousands of children are murdered in the womb to prevent discovery and the consequent loss of caste, particularly in the houses of the Kulin Bráhmans."

The inveterate tenacity with which the rites and privileges of caste are clung to is a prominent feature of the Hindoo

* Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai, in the end of the 18th century, used to restore persons and families who had forfeited their caste by their carelessness, by recovering from them a heavy fine, about which there used to be much higgling. This fine was in addition to the expenses incidental to the ceremony of *Prayischittra.* Many heads of *Dulls*, or parties, of our day follow the same practice.

character, showing, like many other facts, that while as a nation—the Rájputs excepted—they fear the sword-blade, they can meet death with calmness and fortitude when they apprehend any danger to the purity of caste. In the year 1777, a Mussalman nobleman forcibly seized the daughters of three Bráhmans. They complained to the judge of the district, but, obtaining no redress, they committed suicide by poison under the nose of the unrighteous judge. "When, about a century since, a body of sepoys were being brought from Madras to Calcutta, the provisions ran short, till at last the only food consisted of salted beef and pork. Though a few submitted to the necessity of circumstances and defiled themselves, many preferred a languishing death by famine to a life polluted by tasting forbidden food. The Mussalman governors often took advantage of this prejudice, when their exchequers were empty. The Hindoo would submit to the most excruciating tortures rather than disclose his hoard, but the moment his religious purity was threatened, he complied with any demand, if the sum asked for was within his means; if not, the man being linked to his caste-fellows, the latter raised the required sum by subscription."

In a moral point of view, the effects of caste distinctions are equally mischievous. Far from promoting a spirit of benevolence and good fellowship between man and man, caste has a natural tendency to engender hostile feelings, which cannot fail to militate against the best interests of humanity. Should a Hindoo of superior caste happen to be touched by one of inferior caste while he is cooking or eating, he must throw away everything as defiled. Even in cases of extreme sickness, the one will seldom condescend to drink water out of the hands of the other. There are also instances on record in which two Hindoos of the same caste refuse to eat together, merely because they belong to two different *dalls*, or parties. In the villages especially this partisan feeling is sometimes carried to so great a length that neither party will scruple to

blast the fair fame of their antagonists by scandalous accusations and uncalled-for slanders. Thousands and thousands of rupees are spent in securing the favors or alliance of the *Kulins*—the great arbiters of caste; and he who by the power of his purse can enlist on his side a larger number of these pampered *Kulins*, generally bears away the palm. The hard struggle for the attainment of this hollow, ephemeral distinction, instead of stimulating any noble desire or laudable ambition, almost invariably fosters an antagonistic spirit, which is decidedly opposed to good fellowship and the general brotherhood of mankind. Genuine charity can never exist in such an unexpansive state of society, and mutual love is torn to shreds. If the original founders of the system had calmly and soberly considered, apart from selfish motives, a tithe of the evils which the caste-system was calculated to inflict on society, they would, I make no doubt, have paused before imposing on Hindoo society the fetters of caste servitude.

It has been urged by the advocates of the system that it is designed to confer a great boon on society by confining each trade or occupation to one particular class, and thereby securing perfection in that line. But the argument is as fallacious as the result is disappointing. Experience and observation sufficiently prove that the Hindoo artisans use almost the same tools and implements which their predecessors used centuries ago. They work with the same loom and spindle, the same plough, the same spade, the same scythe, the same threshing-machine, and the same everything that were in vogue in the time of *Vikramáditya* in the sixteenth century, and if any improvement has been effected, it is owing to the superior skill of the foreigners. It is, however, creditable to the native artisans to say that they evince a great aptitude for learning and imitating what they see. Native carpenters, shoemakers, tailors, engravers, lithographers, printers, gold and silversmiths, &c., now-a-days turn out articles which in point of workmanship are not very much inferior to those imported

from Europe. Of course they are materially indebted to Europeans for the necessary training.

The circumstances which cause the loss of caste are the following: The abandonment of the Hindoo religion; residence in foreign countries, which involves the eating of forbidden food; the eating of food cooked by one of inferior caste, or of food forbidden to the Hindoos; female unchastity in a family; the cohabiting with women of a lower caste, or with those of foreign nations; and the non-performance of religious rites prescribed in the Shastras.* There are other circumstances which detract from the dignity of a family, but they are of secondary importance. These causes were in full operation some seventy or eighty years ago. The unanimous voice of the neighbours denounced a Hindoo as an outcast if he were found guilty of any of the above-mentioned transgressions. Purity of caste was then watched with greater solicitude than purity of conscience or character. The magnates of the land spared neither expense nor pains to preserve inviolate the outward purity of their caste. The popular shastras of the Hindoos are certainly very convenient and accommodating in every respect; the sins of a lifetime, nay of ten lives, may be washed away by an ablution in the sacred stream of the Ganges on the occasion of certain *holy days*, called *yogas*; thus requisite provision is made in them for the atonement of the loss of caste by performing certain religious rites, and giving a feast and making suitable presents to Bráhmans in money and kind. But it has always been a matter of wonder to many that the *Pirális*, or the Tagores, of Calcutta, alike noted for their wealth and liberality, have not as yet been able to regain their caste or their original position in Hindoo society. The obvious reason appears to be that they are not desirous of a restoration by submitting to any kind of humiliating atonement. They

* The non-performance of religious rites does not now, however, entail forfeiture of caste. Hindoo society is getting lax in our days.

have shown their wisdom in pursuing such an independent and manly course. The history of *Pirálism* is thus given by Mr. Ward : "A Nabob of the name of *Pir Ali* is charged with having destroyed the rank of many Hindoos, Bráhmans and others; and from these persons have descended a very considerable number of families scattered over the country, who have been branded with the name of their oppressor. These persons practise all the ceremonies of the Hindoo religion, but are carefully avoided by other Hindoos as out-casts. It is supposed that not less than fifty such families live in Calcutta, who employ Bráhman priests to perform the ceremonies of the Hindoo religion for them. It is said that Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai was promised one lakh of rupees by a *Piráli*, if he would only honor him with a visit of a few moments, but he refused."

The following is a more recent account of the origin of the Piráli or Tagore family published by the late Honorable Prasanna Kumár Tagore, C.S.I., which has been kindly placed at my disposal:—"*Purushottama* was called *Piráli* for having married the daughter of a person who was blemished in caste. According to the books of the *Ghattaks*, *Jánakey Ballabha* and *Kámadeva Raya Chowdhuri*, inhabitants of Gurgain, in Pergunnah *Chengutea*, brought a suit against an ancestor of *Srikánta Raya* of Jessore. An amîn named *Pir Ali Khan* was deputed by the zemindar for the purpose of holding an investigation into the case. There was an altercation between the Amin and some of the inhabitants of the place as to whether the smell of a thing was tantamount to half eating it. Some time after, the said *Pir Ali Khan* invited several persons, all of whom lost their caste, as he made them smell forbidden food. *Jánakey Ballabha* and *Kámadeva Raya*, having sat near the Amin and been reported to have eaten the food, became Mahomedans under the names of *Jamal Khan* and *Kamal Khan Choudhuri*, pursuant to the decision of the *Pandits* of those times. Their descendants, *Arjuna Khan*,

Deno Náth Khan Chovdhuri, &c., live like Mahomedans up to this day in *Magurya* and *Basundia*, Parganna *Chengutea*, Zilla Jessore. They form their connections by marriage with the *Khan Choudhuries* of *Broome*, but not with any other Mahomedans. The remaining persons present on the occasion were called *Pirâli*. *Purushottama* was one of the latter. Others give a different account. They say that when *Purushottama* was in Jessore, on his way to bathe in the Ganges, the *Choudhuries* of that place, who became polluted in the above mentioned way, forcibly took him to their house with a view to give him a daughter of theirs in marriage, on account of his learning and superior caste. Seeing that the bride was very beautiful, *Purushottama* agreed to marry her, under authority of a text in *Menu* to the following effect: 'A believer in Scripture may receive * * * * a woman bright as a gem, even from the basest family.' Thus he got his father-in-law's blemish, which has continued to mark his descendants. After this marriage, Purushottama left the original seat of his family and settled in Jessore. [The Tagores have always since been connected by marriage with the *Pirâlis* of Jessore from whom they springs.] It is said by some that *Jagannatha*, the father of *Purushottama*, instead of the latter, married a daughter of the *Choudhuries*. *Purushottoma* had a son named *Balaráma*, who wrote a work entitled Probodhaprokasa. *Panchánana*, the fifth in descent from *Balaráma* and 26th from *Bhattanaráyana*, left Jessore and came to *Govindapore*, the site of Fort William,—where he purchased land, and built thereon a dwelling-house and a temple, which he dedicated to Siva. This brought him in contact with the British, with whom he became very intimate. All Bráhmans who held situations under the British were then called Thaquore. *Panchánana* was also known by that name among the residents of Govindapore. Since that time the members of his family have continued to bear that appellation, which has been corrupted into Tagore. Englishmen write Tagore, though

some of them confess that it sounds harder than Thaquore. In an article on Hindoo Civilians, and their value, published in the London *Spectator*, we find the following :—'One single family, the Tagores—as we are pleased to write their much softer name—happen by accident to be exempt from these restrictions (crossing the black water, &c.) They, though Bráhmans of pure blood, with a pedigree to which that of the Bourbons is modern, are descended from an ancestor who broke caste, are out of the pale, and, as a caste by themselves, make their own social laws at discretion.' All members of the family who were Oriental scholars used to write Thaquore. Woma Nandana, the fourth in descent from Panchánana, always signed his name in the above way. Hence Tagore is nothing more than a corruption of Thaquore. It is now too late to adopt the correct spelling, as innumerable documents and title-deeds would have to be changed, which is impracticable. *Panchánana* had a good knowledge of business, and was very fond of music. His son Jairám was employed as an amin in the settlement of the 24 Pargannas, and discharged his duties with considerable credit. At the capture of Calcutta he is said to have lost all his property, with the exception of rupees 13,000 in cash, which, together with the sale-proceeds of the ornaments of the female members of his family, he applied to the worship of his family god. His sons had no concern whatsoever with the above sum. One of them, Darpa Náráyana, it is said, contributed rupees 30,000 to the worship of the aforesaid idol.

"Jairám's house was taken by the English for the purpose of building Fort William. He received some money and land as compensation, and removed himself to Páthureaghátá, in Calcutta, where he purchased land near the river, with a view to erect a dwelling-house and a family bathing-ghat, as, according to the usage of those days, every rich and well-known family had a separate bathing-ghat of its own. When *Jairám* came to Calcutta, the Setts were its most respect-

able and influential inhabitants. By their advice he established the family idol above alluded to, to witness which the neighbours often came to his house, and thus cultivated his acquaintance. [Ramkrishna Mallik, the nearest neighbour and father of Baishnab Charan Mallik, exchanged his turban with Darpa Nárâyana, and became his intimate friend, which friendship is continued by his descendants up to the present time.] He died in the year 1762, leaving four sons, named Anandirám, Nilmani, Darpa Náráyana and Govinda. The eldest Anandirám was the first who received a liberal English education. His family, and that of his youngest brother, who superintended the building of Fort William, have become extinct. Nilmani was the grandfather of Dwarká Náth Tagore, who was universally respected, and who occupied a foremost rank in the society of his day, owing to his princely charity, enlightened patriotism and philanthropy."

Such was the virulence with which the caste-mania raged, when Hindoo bigotry had reached its culminating point. Rájá Krishna Chandra Rai of Krishnaghar, about sixty miles north of Calcutta, was otherwise reputed to have been a very generous-hearted man, a great patron of learning and learned men; but he was so blindly led away by the impulse of bigotry that he unhesitatingly declined to assist a fellow-countryman of his who had been subjected to social ostracism through mere accident. But the Rájá's grandson, if I am rightly informed, when he had occasion to come down to Calcutta a few years back, without scruple took up his quarters at Spence's Hotel, and freely enjoyed the company of his European friends, indicating a healthy change in the social economy of the people,—the result solely of intellectual expansion, and the inauguration of a better era through the general diffusion of western knowledge.*

* I am inclined to believe that what the late Nadea Rájá did was his own individual act; as the head of the Hindoos of Bengal, the Rájá of Nadea would strictly follow the practices of his great ancestor even to this day.

The *Piráli*, or the Tagore, family of Calcutta, be it recorded to their honor, have long been eminently distinguished by their liberality, manly independence, enlightened principles and enterprising spirit. Some of the members of this family occupied the foremost rank amongst the friends of native improvement. The late Babu Dwarká Náth Tagore set a noble example to his countrymen by his disinterested exertions in the cause of native education and various public charities. Several of his European friends, in peculiarly embarrassed circumstances, were under deep obligations to him for his unbounded liberality;* the length of his purse was equalled by the breadth of his views. His object in proceeding to England was mainly to extend his knowledge by a closer and more familiar intercourse with Europeans. He was the right hand of the illustrious Hindoo reformer, the late Rájá Rámmohan Rai. His magnanimous mind, his enlightened views, his engaging manners, his amiable qualities, both in public and private life, and his indomitable zeal in endeavouring to elevate his country in the scale of civilization, gave him an influence in English society never enjoyed before or after by any Hindoo gentleman. His worthy relative and coadjutor, the late Babu Prasanna Kumár Tagore, C.S.I., who has left a princely fortune, was no less distinguished for his enlarged views and liberal sentiments. His rich endowment of the Tagore law Lectureship in connection with the Calcutta University has substantially established his claim to the gratitude of his countrymen. It was he that first started the native English Paper called the "Reformer," which not only opened the eyes of the Hindoos to the errors of the antiquated system under which they lived, but diffused a healthy taste for the cultivation of English literature among the rising

* To one friend alone he gave two lakhs of rupees without any security. showing a degree of magnanimity seldom to be met with among the millionaires of the present day.

generation of his countrymen, and thereby paved the way for the development of advanced thought and intelligent opinion, on which mainly depends the future advancement of the nation. The late Mahárájá Ramánáth Tagore, C.S I., another member of the same family, was deservedly esteemed for his liberal sentiments, his high sense of honor, his scrupulous fidelity, and his unblemished character. Babu Debendranáth Tagore, the son of the late Babu Dwarká Náth Tagore, bears a highly exemplary character. His uncompromising straightforwardness, his sincerity and piety, his high integrity his devotedness to the cause of religion, his unassuming habits, the suavity of his disposition, and his utter contempt for worldly enjoyments, have shed an unfading lustre around his name. Well may India be proud of such a worthy son. Mahárájá Jotendramohan Tagore, K.C.S.I., Rájá Sourendramohan Tagore, his brother,—to whom the Hindoo music is indebted for its revival,—and Babu Gyanendramohan Tagore, the son of the late Babu Prasanna Kumár Tagore, also belong to this family,—all of them bear a very high character for intelligence, integrity, and sound moral principles.

The list of the distinguished members of the Tagore family would not be complete without an honorable mention of the name of Baboo Káli Krishna Tagore. He is a consistent, unassuming, and liberal minded gentleman. In private life he is much esteemed for his many excellent qualities. The unaffected simplicity of his manners, the suavity of his disposition, his geniality, his liberality in assisting efforts whether of a public or private character, without the faintest touch of vanity,—in short, the consecration of his life to the noblest purposes of humanity,—have all combined to associate his name with the best benefactors of his race.

All these distinguished individuals are descended from *Pirálí* ancestors. But few have more deservedly merited the respect and esteem of their countrymen, or better vindicated their rightful claim to the honors bestowed on some

of them. If they are denounced as outcasts, such outcasts are the ornaments of the country. If they are far in the rear in respect of caste, they are assuredly far in the van in respect of intelligence, ability, mental activity, refinement, and honesty. If to be a *Pirâli* were an indelible stigma, it is certainly a glory to the whole nation that such a noble and stainless character as Babu Debendranâth Tagore is a member of the same family. We may search in vain among the countless myriads of India for such a meek, spotless, but bright and glorious model. It is moreover to the *Pirâli* or Tagore family that the enlightened Hindoo community of Calcutta is principally indebted for its refined taste and elevated ideas. May they continue to shed their benign influence not only on the rising but on the unborn generations of their countrymen, and carry on the work of reformation, not with the impetuosity of rash innovators, but with the cool deliberation of reflecting minds.

The rules of caste are not now strictly observed, and their observance is scarcely compatible with the spirit of the age; and in one sense we have scarcely a genuine Hindoo in Bengal, especially amongst those who live in Calcutta and the district towns.

The distinction of caste is more honored in the breach than in the observance of it.* As English schools and colleges are

* The younger members of a family have no hesitation in partaking of food cooked by Mussalmans and forbidden in the Hindoo Shastras. On holidays, or on special occasions, they send orders to the "Great Eastern Hotel," and get supplies of English delicacies such as they have a liking for. It is a well-known fact that almost every rich family in Calcutta and its suburbs (the orthodox members excepted), recognized as the heads of the Hindoo community, patronize the English Hotel-keepers. Mr. D. Wilson, the famous purveyor in Old Court House Street, seeing the great rush of native gentlemen into his shop on a Christmas-eve, was said to have remarked that the Babus were amongst his best customers. The great purveyor was right, because the Babus give large orders and pay regularly for fear

multiplying in every nook and corner of the empire, more liberal ideas and principles are being imbibed by the Hindoo youths, which bid fair in process of time to exercise a regenerating influence on the habits of the people. Idolatry, and its necessary concomitant priestcraft, are fast losing their hold on their minds; a new phase of life indicates the near approach of an improved order of things; ideas which had for ages been pent up in the dark, dreary cell of ignorance, now find a free outlet, and the recipients of knowledge breathe a purer atmosphere, clear of the hazy mists that had hitherto clouded their intellect. To a philanthropist such a forecast is in the highest degree encouraging. The distinction of caste has also received a fatal blow by the frequent visits of young and aspiring native gentlemen to England for the purpose of completing their education there. This growing desire among the rising generation should be encouraged, as it has an excellent tendency to promote the moral and intellectual improvement of the nation.

The late Babu Rámdulál Dey,* of Calcutta, who was a self-made man and a millionaire, was a *Dalapati*, or head

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of exposure. Such of them as are placed in mediocre circumstances arrange with their Mussalman syces, and get fowl curry or roast as often as they choose. There are indeed a few exceptions, who, on principle, do not encourage the English style of eating and drinking. A very little reflection will convince any one that the English mode of living is ill-suited to the Natives. It not only leads a man into extravagance, but what is more reprehensible, begets a habit of drinking, which has been the ruin of many a promising young Babu.

* This gentleman was Banian to several American and English firms, which used to deal largely in cow and other hides. From religious scruples he refused to accept the usual commission on such articles, though he might have obtained thereby at least forty thousand rupees per annum. In these days no Babu declines to take the usual commission; but, on the contrary, many are engaged in the trade, which is sacrilegious in the eye of the Hindoo Shastra.

of a party. When the subject of caste was discussed, he emphatically said, that "the caste was in his iron chest," the meaning of which was, that money has the power of restoring caste.

The late Babu Rám Gopál Ghose, a distinguished merchant and reformer of this city, had a country-residence at Bagati, near Tribani, in the Hugli district, about 30 miles from Calcutta. He had a mother, who was, as might be expected, a superstitious old lady. Babu Rám Gopál, on principle, never wounded her feelings by interfering with her religious belief. On the occasion of the Durgá-pujá at his country-house, his mother, as usual, directed the servants to distribute the *naibidhi*, or offerings, consisting of rice, fruits and sweetmeats, among the Bráhmans of the neighbourhood; but they all, to a man, refused to accept the same, on the ground that Rám Gopál was not a *Hindoo*, which was tantamount to declaring that he had no faith in Hindooism, and was an outcast from Hindooism. On seeing the offerings brought back, his mother's lamentations knew no bounds, because the refusal of the Bráhmans to accept the offerings was a dishonor, and involved the question of the loss of caste. Apprehending the dreadful consequences of such a refusal, especially in a village where bigotry reigned supreme, the old lady became quite disconsolate. Rám Gopál, who with strong common sense combined the benefit of a liberal English education, thought of the following expedient: He at once suggested that every *naibidhi* (offering) should be accompanied by a sum of five rupees. The temptation was too great to be resisted; the very Bráhmans who, two hours before, openly refused to take the offerings, now came running in numbers to Rám Gopál's house for their share, and regularly scrambled for it. In fact, he had more demands than he could meet. Thus a few rupees had the marvellous effect of turning a *Saheb* into a pure Hindoo, fully illustrating the truth of Rámdulál Dey's saying that "caste was in his iron chest." Examples of this nature may

be multiplied to any extent, but they are not necessary. Thus we see the decadence of this artificial system is inevitable, as indeed of every other unhealthy institution opposed to the best interests of humanity.

I cannot close this chapter without drawing the attention of my readers to the gross inconsistency of the caste apologists. Thousands and tens of thousands of the most orthodox Hindoos daily violate the rules of caste by using the *shidha chál* (rice husked by boiling), which is often prepared by Mussalmans and other low caste husbandmen, whose very touch is pollution to the food of the Hindoo. It is a notorious fact that nine-tenths of the Hindoos of Bengal, including the Bráhman class, are in the habit of eating *shidha chál*, simply because the other kind of rice, *átab chál* (rice husked by drying in the sun), contains too much starch, and is difficult of digestion by *bhayto*, or rice-fed Bengalis, who are, with a few exceptions, constitutionally weak from a variety of causes enumerated before. In the Upper Provinces, the people never use *shidha* rice owing to its being boiled in an unhusked state.

The Hindoos of our day often consume sugar refined with the dust of bone-charcoal. The universal use of *shidha* rice and of sweetmeats which contain refined sugar leads the Hindoos to break the rules of caste almost every hour of their lives. Besides these two chief articles of food, there are several other things made by Mussalmans, such as rose-water, *kaowra árauk*, machine-made ice, and the like, the general use of which is a direct violation of the rules of caste. A Hindoo female, when she becomes a widow at an advanced period of life, sometimes takes to *átab* rice, because it is not produced from boiled paddy which makes it impure, but from sun-dried paddy; and here the members of the Tagore family are more strict in their *regimen* than any other class of Hindoos in Bengal. There are, however, yet a few orthodox Hindoos who, though they eat *shidha* rice, nevertheless abstain from using bazar made sweetmeats and municipal pipe-water, because the engines

of the latter are said to be greased and worked by Mussalman and Christian hands. Such men make their own sweetmeats at home with Benares sugar, and drink Ganges water; but the younger members of their family, if not with their approval, at least with their partial cognizance, daily make the greatest inroads on this institution, without having the moral courage to avow their acts. They eat and drink in the European fashion, and preserve their caste intact by a positive and emphatic disclaimer. So much for the consistency of their conduct. When the orthodox heads of Hindoo families are gathered unto their fathers, the watchword of the rising generation will be— "perish caste with all its monstrous evils."

XIV.

A BRÁHMAN.

A Bráhman of the present iron age is quite a different ecclesiastic from what he was in the past golden age. He is a metamorphosed being. He claims indeed to have descended from the mouth of the Supreme Brahmá, the Creator in the Hindoo triad; but, in the lapse of time, his physical organization,—his traditional reputation as a saint and sage,—his thorough devotion to his religious duties,—his mental abstraction,—his logical acumen,—the purity of his character, his habitude and mode of living,—have all undergone a radical change, unequivocally indicating the gradual declension of corporeal strength, of intellectual vigor, as well as of moral worth. In former times, he was popularly regarded as the visible embodiment of the Creator and the delegated exponent of all knowledge, revealed or acquired. The old and venerable Munis and Rishis, and their philosophical dissertations, their theological controversies and their religious and ethical disquisitions evoked the admiration of the world in the dark ages before the Christian era. Almost all of them lived in a state of asceticism, and devoted their lives to religious contemplation, renouncing all the pleasures, passions and desires of the world. The longevity of their lives in their sequestered retreat,—the perfect purity of their manners,—the simplicity of their habits,—and their elevated conception of the immutable attributes of God, inspired the people with a profound reverence for their precepts and principles. The prince and the peasant alike paid homage to the sacerdotal class, whose

doctrines had, in the primitive state of society, the authority of religion and law.

Their origin, power and privileges have thus been graphically described by the late Dr. John Wilson :—

"Since the Bráhman sprung from the most excellent part,—since he was the first born,—and since he possesses the Veda, he is by right the chief of this whole creation. Him the Being who exists of himself produced in the beginning from his own mouth, that, having performed holy rites, he might present clarified butter to the gods, and cakes of rice to the progenitors of mankind, for the preservation of this world. What created being then can surpass him with whose mouth the gods of the firmament continually feast on clarified butter, and the manes of ancestors on hallowed cakes? The very birth of Bráhmans is a constant incarnation of Dharma (God of religion), for the Bráhman is born to promote religion and to procure ultimate happiness. When a Bráhman springs to light, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures, assigned to guard the treasury of duties, religious and civil. Whatever exists in the universe, is all in effect the wealth of the Bráhman, since the Bráhman is entitled to it all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth. The Bráhman eats but his own food, wears his own apparel, and bestows but his own in alms: through the benevolence of the Bráhman, indeed, other mortals enjoy life. His inherent qualities, however sparingly they may be developed, are 'quiescence, self-control, devotion, purity, patience, rectitude, secular and sacred understanding, the recognition of spiritual existence, and the inborn disposition to serve Brahmá.' In every member of his body, power and glory are resident. The purifying Ganges is in his right ear; his mouth is that of god himself; the devouring fire is in his hand; the holy *tirthas*, or places of pilgrimage, are in his right foot; the cow of the plenty (*kámdhenu*), from which all desires may be satisfied, is in the hairs of his body. The Bráhman is the '*firstborn*' by nature (*agrajanma*);

the '*twiceborn*' (*dvija*), by the sacrament of the *maunji;* the deity on the earth (*bhudeva*), by his divine status; and the intelligent one (*vipra*), by his innate comprehension.

"Who without perishing could provoke those holy men by whom all-devouring fire was created, the sea with waters not drinkable, and the moon with its wane and increase? What prince could gain wealth by oppressing those who, if angry, could frame other worlds and regents of worlds and could give being to new gods and mortals? What man, desirous of life, would injure those by the aid of whom worlds and gods perpetually exist.

"The following syllogism has gained universal currency in India:—

'The whole world is under the power of gods,
The gods are under the power of the *mantras*,
The *mantras* are under the power of the Bráhman;
Bráhman is therefore our God.'"

The power of the Bráhmans extended over every class of the people, and by way of eminence they called themselves *Dvija*,—*i.e.*, the regenerated or the twice-born—a term which should only be applied to the really inspired sons of God. At the promulgation of the Institutes of Manu they obtained that prominent rank among the Hindoos which they have retained unimpaired amidst all dynastic changes. Keeping the key of knowledge in their own exclusive custody, their functions were originally confined to the performance of religious ceremonies and the promulgation of laws. In all the affairs of the state or religion, the fiat of their ordinances had all the weight of a sacred command. Even the order of a mighty potentate was held in subordination to their injunctions. They were enjoined to worship their guardian deity three times a day, and were strictly prohibited from engaging in any secular occupation. They practised all manner of austerities tending to beget a contempt for all worldly enjoyments, and paved the way by religious meditation

for ultimate absorption into the divine essence,—a sublime ideal of which we can have no conception in the present degenerate age.

The complete monopoly of religious and legal knowledge which the Bráhmans enjoyed for a very considerable period after the first dawn of learning in the East, anterior to the Christian era, enabled them to put forth their very great influence upon the spiritual and temporal concerns of the three other orders of the Hindoo population, who implicitly accorded to them all the rights of a privileged class, superior to all earthly power whatsoever. It has been expressly declared in the Institutes of Manu that Hindoo law was a direct emanation from God. "That Immutable Power," says Manu, "having enacted this Code of Laws, himself taught it fully to me in the beginning; afterwards I taught Marichi and the nine other holy sages." It is believed that, in the tenth century, B. C., "the complete fusion of Hindoo law and religion" was effected; and that both were administered by the Bráhmans, until some mighty kings arose in Rájputáná, who, curtailing their supreme influence, reduced them to a secondary position. Thenceforward the ascendency of the Bráhmans gradually began to decline, till at length, through succeeding generations, it dwindled into comparative insignificance.* In process of time, the four grand original classes became multiplied, which is not to be wondered at in a great community, split into divisions and subdivisions, separated from each other by different creeds, manners, customs and modes of life. These ramifications necessarily involved diversities of religious, moral, and legal opinions and doctrines, more or less fatal to the pre-

* As the natural consequence of this loss of supremacy and other causes, Bráhmanical learning slept a winter-sleep, occasionally disturbed and broken by brilliant coruscations of light thrown upon it by Western researches. contemporaneously sustained by the faint efforts of learned Paudits.

viously unquestioned authority of the Bráhmans. Seeing in the progress and revolution of society the inevitable decay of their hitherto undisputed influence, the Bráhmans then abandoned the traditional and prescribed path of a religious life, and betook themselves to the secular pursuit of gain for their subsistence. The necessary consequence is, that, in almost every sphere of life, in every profession or calling, the Bráhmans of the present day are extensively engaged. Their cupidity is so great, that every principle of law and morality is shamefully compromised in their dealings with mankind. A Bráhman is no longer typical of either religious purity or moral excellence. His profound erudition,—his logical subtlety in spinning into niceties the most commonplace distinctions,—his spirit of deep research,—and his illimitable power of polemical discussion, have all forsaken him; and from an inspired priest he has degenerated into a mercenary *purohít.* He no longer wears on his forehead the frontlet of righteousness; his whole heart, his whole soul is impregnated with corruption. In a fervent spirit, he no longer says to his followers—"Let us meditate on the adorable light of the Divine Ruler; may it guide our intellect." His sacred *poitá* (Bráhmanical thread),—his divine *gáyatri* (prayer),—his holy *basil* (bead roll),—his three daily services with the sacred water of the Ganges, no longer inspire the minds of his votaries with awe, obedience, and homage. From the worship of the only Living and True God he has descended to the worship of 330 millions of gods and goddesses. Human numeration reels at the list. The individuality of the godhead is lost in the never-ending cycles of deified objects, animate and inanimate. We no longer recognize in the Bráhmanical character and life an unsullied image of godlike purity, holiness, and sublimity. His ministrations no longer fill us with joyful and exhilarating hopes which extend beyond the grave, and promise to lead us to the safe anchorage of everlasting bliss. They no longer stir up in our breasts, during each

hour of life's waning lustre, "a sublimer faith, a brighter prospect, a kinder sympathy, a gentler resignation." I ask every Hindoo to look into his heart honestly and answer frankly whether a Bráhman of the present day is a true embodiment, a glorious display, a veritable representative of Brahmá, the Creator. Has he not long since sacrificed his traditional pure faith on the altar of selfishness and concupiscence, and committed a deliberate suicide of his moral and spiritual faculties? We blush to answer the question in the affirmative.

I now purpose to give a short account of the ceremonies connected with the investiture of a Bráhman with the *poitá*, the sacred thread, on the strength of which he assumes the highest ecclesiastical honors and privileges. By consulting the Hindoo almanac, an auspicious day is fixed upon for this important ceremonial, which opens a new chapter in the life of a Bráhman, and is especially intended to ensure to him all the rare benefits of a full-blown *Dvija*, or twice-born. In celebrating the rite, particular regard is had to the state of the weather: should any atmospheric disturbance occur, the ceremony is postponed to the next fine day, which must also be an auspicious day according to Hindoo belief. The age assigned for the investiture is between nine and fifteen years, discarding the even years. The occasion is accompanied in many cases by the preparation of *ánanda náru*, a kind of home-made sweetmeat made of powdered rice, treacle, cocoanut, and gingelly seeds, rolled up into small round balls and fried in mustard oil. This particular sort of Hindoo confectionery, evidently a very primitive preparation, is manufactured on all occasions indicative of domestic rejoicing, hence the name given above. Before the appointed day, the boy is enjoined to abstain from the use of fish and oil; on the morning of the ceremony, having been shaved, he is made to bathe and put on red clothes; and when the rite of investiture commences, he wears a conical-shaped tinsel hat, while the priest reads certain

incantations, and worships Náráyana, or Vishnu, represented by a small round stone, called *Sálgrám Silá*, the ordinary household-god of all Hindoos.* A piece of cloth is held over his head, that he may not see, or be seen by, any of the non-Bráhmanical caste. He then assumes the *danda*, or the staff of an ascetic mendicant, which is represented by the branch of a *vilwa* tree held in his right hand, at the top of which is a bit of dyed cloth tied in a knot. A preliminary *poitá*, made of twisted *kusa* grass, to which is fastened a piece of deer skin, is next placed over the boy's left shoulder, during the repetition of the prescribed incantations. The father then repeats to his son, in a low voice, lest a Sudra should hear, the sacred *gáyatri* three times, which the boy tries his best to commit to memory. The *kusa* grass *poitá* is then removed, and a real thread *poitá*, spun by Bráhman women,† which he is to wear ever afterwards, is substituted in its place. The

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* Almost every respectable Bráhman family keeps and worships an image of Náráyana, or Sálgrám Silá, to whom offerings are made in the morning and evening. On one occasion a young Bráhman lad, who had received an English education, was, in the absence of the elder members of the family, called to perform the evening service, while he was engaged in partaking with some of his friends of a few Mahomedan made *koptas*. or minced pies, for which unhappily some native youths have imbibed a liking—the outcome certainly of an Anglicised taste. The call being too imperative, and the temptation too great to be resisted, he at once fastened his own share of the eatable to one end of his *chadar*—sheet, performed the requisite service, made the god sleep, came out of the room, and met his friends again and enjoyed his portion of the repast without the least compunction. This is surely an act of desecration for which the juvenile offender should be consigned to the penalties of perdition. A single stroke of the "red right arm" above us ought at once to have crushed one guilty of such a profane interference in the sanctity of a divinity. But alas! what huge shams and how practically impotent are all our gods!

† To so miserable a strait are some of them reduced that they actually strive to get a living by making these sacred thread *poitás*

boy now puts on his shoes, and holds an umbrella in his hand, while the priest reads, and the father repeats, the usual incantations, tending to awaken in the boy a sense of the grave responsibility he assumes. Thus dressed as a *Brahmachárí* (a religious mendicant), with a staff upon his shoulder and a beggar's wallet hanging by his side, he goes to his mother, father, and other relatives, and begs alms, repeating at the same time a certain word in Sanskrit. They give him each a small quantity of rice, a few *poitás*, and a few rupees, amounting in some cases two to three hundred. The boy then squats down while the father offers a burnt sacrifice and repeats the customary incantations. After the performance of these ceremonies, the boy, in his *Brahmachárí* attire, suddenly rises up in a fit of pretended ecstacy, and declares before the company that he is determined in future to lead the life of a religious mendicant. The announcement of this resolution instantly evokes the sympathy of the father, mother, and other relatives, and they all persuade him to change his mind and adopt a secular life, citing instances that that life is favourable to the cultivation and growth of domestic and social affections, as well as religious principles of the highest order. The holy Shastra expressly inculcates that a clean heart and a righteous spirit make men happy, even amid the sorrows of earth; and that the sackcloth of mendicancy is not essential to righteousness, if we earnestly

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and strings for the loins, indicating the pinching poverty and repulsive squalor in which they pine away their wretched existence. Indeed, not a few of these widows are left "to the cold pity and grudging charity of a frosty world." They might almost sing and sigh with the poet, as he sat in deep dejection on the shore:

> "Alas! I have nor hope, nor health,
> Nor peace within, nor calm around;
> Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
> The sage in contemplation found;
> * * * *
> Others I see whom these surround,
> Smiling they live, and call life pleasure:
> To me that cup hath been dealt in another measure.

and sincerely ask God to give us His true riches. Thus admonished, he, with apparent reluctance, abandons his design, which is a mere sham, and assumes the *rôle* of secularism. Certain formulas are now repeated, after which the boy lays down his *vilwa* staff, and takes in hand a thin bamboo staff, which he throws over his shoulder. Other rites are then performed, at the close of which the priest receives his fee for his trouble, and departs home with the offerings. The boy next walks into another room, a woman pouring out water as he goes. He is then taught to commit to memory his daily service, called *sandhya*, after the repetition of which he eats the *charú*, made of milk, sugar, and rice boiled together.

For three days after being invested with the *poitá*, the boy is enjoined to sleep either on a carpet or a deer skin, without a mattress or a mosquito curtain. His food consists of boiled rice, ghee, milk, and sugar, etc., only once a day, without oil or salt. He is strictly prohibited to see the sun or the face of a Sudra, and is constantly employed in learning the sacred *gáyatri* and the forms of the daily service, which should be repeated thrice in a day. On the morning of the fourth day, he goes to the sacred stream of the Ganges, throws the two staves into the water, bathes, repeats his prayers, returns home, and again enters on the performance of his ordinary secular duties. During the day, a few Bráhmans are fed according to the circumstances of the family. Thus the ceremony of investiture is closed, and the boy, being purified and regenerated, is elevated to the rank of a *Dvija*, or twice-born. How easily, by the mere administration of a single rite, does the Bráhmanical Shastra make a change for the better in a religious sense in a youth quite incapable of forming adequate conceptions of spiritual regeneration!

Having endeavoured to give thus a short account of the ceremonies connected with the investiture of a Bráhman with the sacred thread, it remains for us to see how far his present

position, character, and conduct harmonize with the reputed sanctity of his regenerated nature. Great blame is laid at the door of the British Government, because it does not accord that high respect to the sacerdotal class which their own Rájás shewed to them in the halcyon days of Hindooism. Before the advent of the British in India, the doctrines of the Bráhmanical creed, as indicated above, were in full force. Every Hindoo king used to enforce on all classes of the people, high or low, a strict observance of the idolatrous ceremonies prescribed in the Hindoo Shastra. In the dark ages scarcely any nation in the world was hemmed in by such a close ring of religious ceremonials as the people of this country. A spirit of religiousness permeates their whole system. It is a well-known fact that no nation was more anxious to perform the service of their gods than the Hindoos. "It is the gods who conquer the enemy, it is the gods who vouchsafe a rich harvest. Health and wealth, children, friends, flocks, and gold,—all are the gifts of the gods." And these are not "unmeaning phrases" among a nation so deeply steeped in superstition. Professor Max Müller, in one of his eloquent Hibbert Lectures, says—"whether we descend to the lowest roots of our own intellectual growth, or ascend to the lofty heights of modern speculation, we find that religion is a power that conquers, and conquers even those who think they have conquered it." Almost every commonplace occurrence had its peculiar rites which required the interposition of the sacerdotal class. On occasions of prosperity or adversity, of rejoicing or calamity, their ministration was alike needed. These ministrations formed their ordinary sources of gain; but the greatest means of support consisted in the grants of lands, including sometimes houses, tanks, gardens, etc., given in perpetuity to the gods or to the priests. These grants are called, as I have already stated, the *Debatras* and *Brahmatras*. The Rájás of Bardwan, Kishnaghar, and Tipperah made the greatest gifts, and their names are still remembered with

gratitude by many a Bráhman in Bengal. But the law authorizing the resumption of rent-free tenures has, as must naturally be expected, made the English Government obnoxious, and it is denounced in no measured terms for this sacrilegious act. If Manu were to visit Bengal now, his indignation and amazement would know no bounds, on witnessing the sacerdotal class reduced to the humiliating position of a servile, cringing, and mercenary crowd of men. Their original prestige has suffered a total shipwreck. Generally speaking, a Bráhman of the present day is practically a Sudra (the lowest class) of the past age, irretrievably sunk from honor and dignity. Indeed, it was one of the curses of the Vedic period that a Bráhman of the present *Kali yuga* would be an impersonation of corruption, baseness, and venality.

There is a common saying amongst the Natives that a Bráhman is a beggar even if he were possessed of a lakh of rupees (£10,000). It is indeed a fact that impecuniosity is the common lot of the class. In ordinary conversation, when the question of the comparative fortunes of the different castes is introduced, a Bráhman is often heard to lament his most impecunious lot. The gains of the sacerdotal class of the present day have been reduced to the lowest scale imaginable. If an officiating priest can make ten rupees a month, he considers himself very well off. He can no longer plume himself on the religious purity and mental superiority, once so pre-eminently characteristic of the order. The spread of English education has sounded the death-knell of his spiritual ascendency. In short, his fate is doomed; he must bear or must forbear, as seems to him best. The tide of improvement will continue to roll on uninterruptedly, in spite of every "freezing and blighting influence," and we heartily rejoice to discover already that the "tender blade is grown into the green ear, and from the green ear to the rich and ripened corn."

When, a few years ago, Sir Richard Temple carefully ex-

amined the Criminal Statistics of Bengal, he was most deeply concerned to find that the proportion of the Bráhman criminals in the jails of the Province was far greater than that of any other caste. This is an astounding fact, bearing the most unimpeachable testimony to the very lamentable deterioration of the Hindoo ecclesiastical class in our days. To expatiate on the subject would be disagreeable. On the other hand, we can point with a degree of pardonable pride to a past period when nine Bráhmans of literary genius, among whom the renowned Kálidás, the Indian Shakespeare, was the most brilliant, flourished in the court of Vikramáditya, in Oujein. But dynastic changes have been simultaneously accompanied by the rapid decline of learning as well as of religious purity.

The English rule, though most fiercely denounced by selfish, narrow-minded men, has nevertheless been productive of the most beneficial results, even so far as the sacerdotal class is concerned. Every encouragement is now-a-days afforded for the cultivation of the classical language of India—Sanskrit; and not only are suitable employments provided for the most learned Pandits* in all the Government Colleges and Missionary and private educational Institutions throughout the country, but the University degrees, conferred on the most

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* However learned a Pandit might be in philology, philosophy, logic and theology, he is lamentably deficient in scientific knowledge, notably in geograpy and ethnology. With a view to test the knowledge of his Pandit on those two subjects, Bishop Middleton is said to have once asked him two very simple questions:—(1) whence are the English come? (2) what is their origin? The reply of the Pandit was somewhat to the following effect: The English are come somewhere from Lanká, or Ceylon (the imaginary land of cannibals), and they are of mixed origin, sprung from monkey and cannibals, because they jabber like monkeys, and sit like them on chairs with their legs hanging down—an attitude peculiar to the monkey species, and like cannibals they eat half-boiled beef, pork, mutton, &c. Childish as the reply was, the pious Bishop, with his wonted benignity, smiled and corrected his error.

successful students, tend to stimulate them to further laudable exertions in the study of the sacred language, which, but for this renewed attempt at cultivation and improvement, would have been very much neglected. Independently of this consideration, it is no less gratifying than certain that the progress of education has produced men, sprung from the sacerdotal class, whose eminent scholarly attainments, high moral principles, and unblemished character, as well as practically useful career, have raised them to the foremost ranks of the Hindoo society. Rájá Rámmohan Rai, Dr. K. M. Banerji, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyaságar, Babu Bhudeb Mukerji, and others of equal mental calibre, are deservedly enshrined in the grateful memory of their countrymen. If Western knowledge had not been introduced into India, men of such high culture and moral excellence would have passed away unnoticed and unrecognized in the republic of letters; and the fruits of their literary labors, instead of being regarded as a valuable contribution to our stock of knowledge, would have been buried in obscurity. To study the lives of such distinguished pioneers of enlightenment, "is to stir up our breasts to an exhilarating pursuit of high and ever-growing attainments in intellect and virtue."

XV.

THE BENGALI BABU.

THIS is a euphonious oriental title, suggestive of some amiable qualities which are eminently calculated to adorn and elevate human life. A Bengali Babu of the present age, however, is a curious product composed of very heterogeneous elements. The importation of Western knowledge has imbued him with new-fangled ideas, and shallow draughts have made him conceited and supercilious, disdaining almost everything Indian, and affecting a love of European æsthetics. The humourous performance of Dave Carson, and the caustic remarks of "Sir Ali Baba," give graphic representations of his anglicised taste, habits and bearing. Any thing affected or imitated is apt to nauseate when contrasted with the genuine and natural.

The anglicised Babus are certainly well-meaning men, instinctively disposed to move within the groove traditionally prescribed for them; but a glimmering of European ideas and a servile imitation of Western manners have played sad havoc with their original tendencies. Ambitious of being considered enlightened and elevated above the common herd, their improved taste and inclination almost unconsciously relegate them to the enchanted dream-land of European refinement, amidst the ridicule of the wise and the discerning. Society now-a-days is a quick-shifting panorama. Old scenes and associations rapidly pass away to make room for new ones, and traditional usages fall into oblivion. A new order of things springs up, and new actors replace the old ones. The influence of the aged is diminished; and the young and impulsive seize with avidity the prizes of life, forgetting in their wild precipitancy the unerring dictates of cool deliberation. "The hurried, bustling, tumultuous, feverish Present swallows up men's thoughts," and the momentous interests of society looming in the Future are almost entirely disregarded. The result necessarily carries them wide of the great object of human

life. They forfeit the regard and sympathy of their fellow countrymen, whose moral and intellectual advancement they should strive to promote by winning their love and confidence.

As a man of fashion the Babu cuts a burlesque figure, by adopting a dress, partly Mussalman and partly European, and by imitating the European style of living, as if modern civilization could be brought about by wearing tight pantaloons, tight shirts, and black coats of alpaca or broadcloth. He culminates in a coquettish embroidered cap or thin-folded shawl-turban, with perhaps a shawl neckcloth in winter. He eats mutton chops and fowl-curry, drinks Brandy-panee or Old Tom, and smokes Manilla or Burmah cigars. Certainly these things are proscribed in the Hindoo Shastra, and an honest avowal of their use will sooner or later expose a man to public derision, and estrange him from the hearts of the orthodox Hindoo. A wise European, who has the real welfare of the people at heart, will never encourage such an objectionable line of conduct, because it is calculated to denationalize them. To be more explicit, even at the risk of verbosity, it should be mentioned that Babus resident in Calcutta not unjustly pride themselves on being the denizens of the great Metropolis of British India, which is unquestionably the focus of enlightenment, the centre of civilization and refinement, and the emporium of fashion in the East. People in the country glory and console themselves with the idea that, in adopting new manners and customs, they are following the example of the big Babus of Calcutta. Although the fashions of Hindoo society in Calcutta do not change with the same rapidity as the fashions in Paris and London, monthly, fortnightly, and weekly, yet they do vary, perhaps, once in two or three years, though even then the change is partial and not radical. Slowly and gradually, the Hindoos of Bengal have abandoned their original and primitive dress, which consisted of thin slender garments, suited to the warm temperature of the climate during the

greater part of the year, and have adopted that of their conquerors. A simple *dhutí* and *dobjá*, with perhaps an *álkhállá* on the back, and a folded *págri* on the head, constituted the dress of a Bengali not long before the battle of Plassey. The court dress was, indeed, somewhat different; but then it was a servile imitation of that of a Rájput chief or a Mussalman king. When Rájás Rájballabh and Nabakrishna, and Sudder-ud-din, a Mohamedan, attended the Government House in the time of Clive and Hastings, what was their court costume but an exact copy of the Mussalman dress. Even now, after the lapse of a century and a half, the Babus use their primitive dress at home, *viz.*, a *dhuti* and an *uráni*. An Englishman would not easily recognize or identify a Bengali at home and a Bengali in his office-dress, the difference being striking and marked. But the establishment of the British rule in India has introduced a very great change in the national costume and taste, as well as an intellectual revolution, which is still greater. Twenty years ago the gala dress of a Bengali boy consisted of a simple Dacca *dhuti* and a Dacca *eklai*, with a pair of tinsel-worked shoes; but now rich English, German, and China satin, brocade and velvet, with raised flowers, and gold and silver fringes and skirts, have come into fashion. It is a common sight to see a boy, dressed in pantaloons and coat made of these costly stuffs, and a laced velvet cap, driving about the streets of Calcutta on festive days. Of course the more genteel and modest of the Babu class, *sobered down* by age and experience, do not share in the juvenile taste for the gaudy and showy. As becomes their maturer years, they are satisfied with a decent broadcloth coat and pantaloons, with a white cloth or Cashmere shawl *págrí*, more in accordance with simple English taste. But both the young and the old must have patent Japan leather shoes from Cuthbertson and Harper, Monteith & Co., or the Bentinck Street Chinese shoemakers, the laced Mussalman shoes having gone entirely out of fashion.

Nor has the taste of the Hindoo females remained in a primitive stage as far as costliness is concerned. Instead of Dacca *Taercha* or *Bale Boota* sári, they must have either Benares gold embroidered or French embossed gossamer *sári*, with gold-lace borders and ends. It would be a very desirable improvement in the way of decency to introduce among the Hindoo women of Bengal a stouter fabric in place of the present thin, flimsy, loose muslin *sári*, without any other covering over it. In this respect, their sisters of the North-Western and Central Provinces, as well as those of the South, are decidedly more decent and respectable. A few respectable Hindoo ladies have, of late years, begun to put on an *unghia* or corset on the upper part of their bodies, but still the nether vestment is shamefully indelicate. Why do not the Babus of Bengal strive to introduce a salutary change in the dress of their mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, which private decency and public morality most urgently demand? These social reforms must go hand in hand with religious, moral, and intellectual improvement. The one is as essential to the elevation and dignity of female character, as the other is to the advancement of the nation in the scale of civilization.

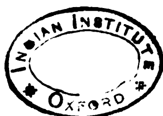
The Lancashire and German weavers have ample cause to rejoice that their colored woollen fabrics have greatly superseded the Indian *Pashminá* goods — Cashmere shawls not excepted,—and European Cashmere, broadcloth, flannel, hosiery and haberdashery are now in great request. From the wealthiest Babu to the commonest fruit-seller, socks or full stockings are very commonly used. This forms an essential part of the official gear of a *kerani* (writer) of the present day, though he is now seen without his national *págrí* or head-dress.

A Bengali Babu is said to be a money-making man. By the most ingenious makeshifts he contrives to earn enough to enable him to make both ends meet, and lay by something for the evening of his life. He is generally a thrifty character,

and does not much mind how the world goes when his own income is sure. He lacks enterprise, and is therefore most reluctant to engage in any risky commercial venture, though he has some very laudable patterns amongst his own country-men, who, by dint of energy, prudence, perseverance and probity, have risen from an obscure position in life to the foremost rank of successful Native merchants. He is destitute of pluck, and the risk of a commercial venture stares him in the face in all his highways and byways. In many cases he has inherited a colossal fortune, but that does not stir up in his breast an enterprising spirit. He seeks and courts service, and in nine cases out of ten succeeds. The sweets of service, and the prospect of promotion and pension, slowly steal into his soul, and he gladly bends his neck under the yoke of servi-tude. But he is a stranger to that "proud submission of the heart which keeps alive in servitude itself the spirit of an exalted freedom." As a vanquished race, subordination is the inevitable lot of the Natives; but it is edifying to see how they hug its trammels with perfect complacency.

The English Government is to the people of Bengal a special boon, a god-send. Almost every respectable family of Bengali Babus, past or present, is more or less indebted to it for status and distinction, position and influence, affluence and prosperity. The records of authentic history clearly demonstrate the fact that the Babus of Bengal have been more benefited by their British rulers than ever they were by any dynasty of their own. Instances are not wanting to corroborate the fact. The love of money is natural in man, and few men are more power-fully and, in many cases, more dangerously influenced by it than the people of this country. "It is a thirst which is inflamed by the very copiousness of its draughts." Possession or accumulation does not satisfy it.

Experience and observation amply attest the truth of the following saying current among the Hindoos of the Upper Provinces, *viz.*, "*Kamayta topiwalla, loteta dhotiwalla,*" the



meaning of which is, "the English earn, the Bengalis plunder." To be more explicit, the English continue to extend their conquests, the Bengali Babus participate in the loaves and fishes of the Public Service. In a dejected spirit a Hindoostani is often heard to mourn; he addresses a Sahib in the most respectful manner imaginable, using such flattering terms as "*Khodáband, garibparbar*," but in nine cases out of ten the Sahib scornfully turns away his head. When, on the contrary, a Bengali *gir gir karkay do bath sonay diya,—i. e.*, jabbers to him a few words,—he patiently listens to him, and signifies by a nod his acquiescence in what he says. In his boorish simplicity, the Hindoostani concludes that the Bengali Babus are well versed in charms, or else how can they manage to tame a grim biped like a Saheb.

With a view to remove this impression, which until recently was so very common among the inhabitants of the Upper Provinces, and the existence of which is so prejudicial to the general encouragement of education throughout India, as well as to the impartial character and high dignity of the paramount power, the Local Governments have been directed in future to select for public service only the educated Natives born and bred under their respective Administrations, in preference to the Bengalis. Thus the aspirations of a Bengali Babu, so far as the Public Service is concerned, are now restricted within the limits of his own Province.

A Bengali Babu is an eager hunter after academic and literary honors. The University confers on him the high degrees of B.A., M.A., and B.L.; and he distinguishes himself as a speaking member of the British Indian Association or of the Calcutta Municipality. He also reads valedictory addresses to retiring Governors and other Government Magnificoes. He is created a Mahárájá, a Rájá, a Rai Báhádur, with perhaps the additional paraphernalia of C.S.I. or C.I.E. As a man of vivid ambition and lofty aspiration, he necessarily hankers after and is ready to dash through thick and thin for these

new honors and decorations. He drives swiftly about in his barouche, with his staff-holder on the coach-box in broadcloth livery. Unfortunately no baronetcy blazons forth in Bengali heraldry, like that bestowed on Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy. The cause is obvious. No millionaire Bengali has to this day contributed so munificently to public charities as the Parsee baronet.

When that distinguished Hindoo reformer, Babu Dwarká Náth Tagore,—the most staunch coadjutor of Rájá Rámmohan Roy,—visited England, it was reported that Her Majesty had most graciously offered to confer on him the title of a rájá; and his liberality and public spirit fully entitled him to that high distinction. But he politely refused it on the ground that his position did not justify his accepting it. He felt that the shadow of a name without the substance was but a mockery. When Rájá Rádhákánt Deb was elected President of the British Indian Association, "he used to declare that he was more proud of that office than of his title of Rájá Báhádur, inasmuch as it made him the head of a body which was a power in the State, and was destined to achieve immense good for the country." At the time of the Prince of Wales's visit to Calcutta, it was said that a certain English-made Rájá was introduced by a Government Magnifico to the Mahárájá of Cashmere; among other matters, the Cashmere Rájá, out of curiosity, asked the Bengal Rájá, where was his ráj (kingdom), and what was the strength of his army? The question at once puzzled him, and his answer was anything but satisfactory.*

* *A propos* it might be mentioned that the popular Hindoo term *Bhumí-sanya* rájá (lack-land rájá) is a term of derision, just as the English expression "Briefless Barrister." Therefore, according to the Hindoo popular way of thinking, vain and empty is the title of rájá when conferred on person who happens to own no landed estate, however worthy he might be in other respects to that honorable distinction. Though now-a-days many a rájá of that description has been created by the generous English Government, still the idea of *a king without a kingdom* is anomalous to many (Shadow without substance!)

Of all the Indian Viceroys, Lord Lytton was certainly the most liberal in bestowing these hollow titles on the Babus of Bengal, under a mistaken notion of thereby winning the love and confidence, which ought to constitute the solid basis of a good Government. A rájáship,* without the necessary equipage and material and moral grandeur of royalty, is but a gilt ornament that dazzles at first sight, but possesses little intrinsic value. It is in fact a misnomer, a sham, a counterfeit. The love of honor or power constitutes one of the main principles of human nature. A rájá, in the true sense of the word, is one who shares in the royalty of divine attributes. He should remember that a man is bound to look to something more than his mere wardrobe and title ; he must possess a goodness and a greatness which will benefit thousands and tens of thousands of his fellow-creatures by the exercise of real, disinterested virtue. Such a career alone can leave an imperishable and ennobling name behind, which will go down to posterity as a pattern of moral grandeur.†

* It is a discreditable fact, but it most assuredly *is* a fact, that when, some years ago, a teacher of the Government School of Art published a book in Bengali on the ancient arts and manufactures of Hindoostan, and sent a copy of it to one of these English-made rájás, he politely refused to take it—the price being one rupee only—saying it was of no use to him, though it was an instructive and suggestive manual. This refusal offers a sad comment on the liberality of my fellow-countrymen towards the encouragement of learning. But turning to the bright side of the picture, I may perhaps be permitted to point with pardonable pride to the almost unparalleled munificence in this respect of the late Babu Káli Prasanna Sing of this City. That distinguished patron of vernacular literature spent, it is said, upwards of £50,000 on the compilation of the Mahábhárat, that grand epic poem of the Hindoos, which, says Talboys Wheeler. still continues to exercise an influence on the masses of the people "infinitely greater and more universal than the influence of the Bible upon modern Europe."

† Of all the English-made rájás of the present day, it is pleasing to recognize in Mahárájá Rájendra Mallik of this City some of the

Politically considered, these titles and decorations have their value, inasmuch as they have a tendency to promote the *entente cordiale* between the rulers and the ruled, and, next to the Public Debt, furnish, in an indirect way, an additional buttress to the stability of the British empire in India.

In former times, when the English rule was just beginning,—when external pageant, the outcome of vanity, was not much thought of,—when the simple taste of the people was not tainted by luxury and corruption, an unnatural craving for titles exerted but a very feeble influence on the minds of the great. Instead of seeking "the bubble reputation," they vied with each other in the extent of their religious gifts and endowments, affording substantial aid to the learned of the land and to the poorer classes of the community. A spirit of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice, never at variance with magnanimity, was conspicuous in all their gifts. The immense extent of *Debatra* and *Brahmatra* land,—*i. e.*, rent-free tenures,—still remaining throughout Bengal, even after the relentless operation of the Resumption Act, bears testimony to their disinterested benevolence and the heartiness with which they sought to promote other men's interests. Of course they were incapable of comprehending the innumerable affinities and relations of life in all its varied phases, rising from the finite and transient to the infinite and the enduring, but whatever they gave, they gave without stint and without ostentation, and with a truly benevolent and disinterested heart, looking to the Most High for their guerdon. The elevated conception of organized

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noble attributes of a true rájá. Modest and unassuming, he manifests a generous disposition to relieve suffering humanity and to do good by stealth. Never did he struggle to thrust himself, by the nature of his work, upon public notice. Gifted with an intelligent mind, a refined taste, and considerable artistic ability, his moral greatness throws all other forms of greatness into the shade. He is not ambitious to make his name the theme, the gaze, the wonder of a dazzled community.

charity never penetrated their minds. Religious gifts and endowments formed the great bulk of their contributions, but they also made permanent provision for the relief of the helpless and the destitute,* though not on the recognized principles of English charity,—*i. e.*, the hospital system, the Nurses' institutions, reformatories for unfortunates, parish relief, funds for the aged and infirm, provision of improved dwellings as well as baths and wash-houses for the working-classes, inaugurated by Mr. Peabody's magnificent gift of £250,000, ragged schools and asylums for the deaf, dumb and blind, supported by voluntary contributions, and other organized methods for

* Of all the Hindoo millionaires whose lives afforded the most ennobling examples of piety and disinterestedness, Lálá Babu—the ancestor of the present Páikpárrá Ráj family, in the suburbs of Calcutta—was certainly one of the most remarkable. He possessed a princely fortune, a considerable portion of which he wisely set apart for the support of the poor and destitute. Unlike most of his wealthy countrymen, he renounced all the pleasures of the world, and in the evening of his life retired with only a shred of cloth to the holy city of Brindában. As a practical illustration of self-denial he actually led the life of a religious mendicant, daily begging from door to door for a mouthful of bread. His religious endowments still continue to offer shelter and food to hundreds of poor people in and around Brindában, the sacred place so graphically described by Colonel Tod. "Though the groves of Brinda," says he, "in which Kánáya (Krishna) disported with the Gopis, no longer resound to the echoes of his flute, though the waters of the Jamna are daily polluted with the blood of the sacred kine, still it is the holy land of the pilgrim, the sacred Jordan of his fancy, on whose banks he may sit and weep, as did the banished Israelite of old, the glories of Mathura, his Jerusalem." Mahárâni Swarnamayi, of Cassimbazar, and Mohárâni Sarat Sundari, of Nattore, are two female characters whose numerous acts of charity have shed a lustre around their names, and whom posterity shall delight to honor as the two great benefactresses of their countrymen. And when history shall make a record of their several charitable acts, it shall be told of both that the prominent trait in their character was one of expansive benevolence.

the relief of distress and destitution throughout the country. It is a sad reflection on the benevolent disposition of the Natives that they cannot boast of anything bearing a remote analogy to the above organized forms of charity. In India there is much individual charity of an impulsive and interested character, but the great element of success in English charity is combination and organization, without which no work of public utility can be successfully carried out.

It is obvious that the peculiar social system of the Natives presents an almost insuperable barrier to the harmonious amalgamation of the different castes, artificially split into numerous subdivisions. In the neighbourhood of Poona, Mr. Elphinstone says, there are about 150 different castes; and in Bengal they are very numerous. They maintain their divisions, however obscurely derived, with great strictness. The religious, moral, and social duties of these classes exhibit marked differences, which are opposed to united effort in the relief of suffering humanity. The idea of a national brotherhood and of a system of universal philanthropy, such as Christianity has nobly inaugurated, is much too elevated for the narrow, contracted minds of the people. Independently of the numerous subdivisions of caste, unhappily there is an impassable gulf between the Hindoos and the Mussulmans—at present the children of the same soil, which has hitherto kept up a state of unhallowed separation, essentially at variance with a cordial coalition for the carrying out of any comprehensive system of Public Charity, designed to benefit both. Time has rooted in the minds of the two communities an implacable mutual hate, quite subversive of the best interests of humanity. Plausible arguments may be adduced in defence of this race antagonism, but let both parties be assured that "by abusing this world they shall not earn a better." Let every act and feeling and motive of both races be merged in one harmonious whole, developing the perfection of human nature in a distinct and bright reality.

A Bengali Babu is fond of discussing European politics. The reading of history has given him a superficial insight into the rise and progress of nations. He does not deny that he merely amplifies and emphasizes the sentiments he has learnt in the school of English politics. The orations of Láll Mohan Ghosh in England have proved that a native of India has mastered the art of thinking on his legs, which is the beginning and end of oratory. A few more earnest men like him, steadily working at the fountain-head of power, would certainly awaken public attention towards the present condition of our country. It was Lord William Bentinck who advised a body of Native Memorialists, anxious for the political emancipation of their country, "to continue to agitate until they gained their end." Constitutional representation to proper authority, his Lordship remarked, would as much command public attention, as idle, factious declamation would divert it.* He was emphatically the "People's William" in India, as Gladstone is in England. He was a statesman who directed his whole attention and energy to internal improvement, repudiating all schemes of aggression or conquest. His beneficence, immortalized in a noble monument—the Calcutta Medical College, will be more gratefully acknowledged by the latest generation than the genius of a Hasting, a Wellesley, or a Dalhousie.

The complete emancipation of India, however, is only a question of time. Babu Láll Mohan Ghosh's speeches in England have not been entirely fruitless, inasmuch as they have evoked and enlisted the sympathy of a few English leaders of public opinion. He is manfully struggling to remove the bar of political disabilities, and to secure for his countrymen

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* Very few persons now remember the days when Chuckerbutty faction and 'grievance Thompson' used to raise a hue and cry in the Fauzdári Bálákhâná Debating Club. formed for the political emancipation of India before the people were fully prepared to appreciate the value of their rights and privileges.

the benefit of representative institutions, for the recognition and appreciation of which they are now prepared. While they hope for the best, they must be prepared for the worst. They must learn meanwhile to cherish, as among the essential elements of ultimate success, a firm, manly, independent and self-denying spirit.

A Bengali Babu is often voted a man of tall talk. Platitude is his *forte*. This is surely true to a certain extent; and until he descends from the lofty regions of speculation to the matter-of-fact arena of practice, both his writings and harangues must necessarily prove abortive. He must learn to exchange verbosity for action in the great battle of life. Every great politician or statesman must have a thorough practical training to enable him to overcome the opposition of different factions, whose interests are jeopardized by his success, and to render his administration a blessing to the people. He must be prepared to grow and advance under adverse influences. The history of that consummate statesman, Sir Salar Jung,—of that distinguished scholar and councillor, Sir T. Madeo Rao,—of that astute minister, Mahárájá Sir Dinkur Rao, furnishes the most illustrious examples of superior administrative ability combined with practical wisdom. Lord Northbrook, in a recent speech at Birmingham, has made honorable mention of these three eminent statesmen, whose valuable services in their respective spheres have long since established their substantial claims to the gratitude of their fellow-countrymen. When Sir Salar Jung visited Europe, his very comprehensive and enlightened views elicited the admiration of several of the wisest statesmen of the age. His able and successful administration at Hyderabad, amidst the fierce opposition of factious parties, affords an admirable illustration of his superior practical wisdom. When, some thirty years ago, Mahárájá Sir Dinkur Rao visited Calcutta, he was the wonder of all who heard him enunciate, in a telling speech at the Town Hall, his high, noble and practical views

on Civil Government. The speech was not made feverish by visions of indistinct good, as Mr. Theodore Dickens said, but it was a clear exposition of the liberal sentiments of a wise statesman. And last, but not least, the career of Kazi Shahabudin, C.S.I., the present Dewan to His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda, should be prominently brought to public notice. His enlightened views, his liberal policy, his administrative ability, the urbanity of his manners, his encouragement to all undertakings of a public nature, and above all his irreproachable character, promise to render the tenure of his office a substantial boon to the people. In him certainly His Highness may be said to have found a trustworthy, faithful, and a thoroughly accomplished Dewan, who is fully alive to the very high responsibilities of his charge.

The Bengalis are not a warlike race. Their traditional habits and usages,—their physique,—their diet and dress,—their natural tendency to slothfulness and effeminacy,—their proverbial quietude,—their general want of pluck and manly spirit,—their ascetic composure, placing the chief joys of life in rest and competency,—all indicate an unwarlike temperament. During the Mutiny of 1857—an event which in atrocious acts of cruelty incomparably surpasses all other historical events ever recorded,—that kind-hearted Governor-General, Lord Canning, was advised to introduce martial law into Calcutta; but he negatived the proposal by emphatically declaring in the Council Chamber that the Bengalis are a mild, tame, inoffensive and loyal race of people, whose only weapon of defence is a simple penknife. A common police-constable with his baton is to them a grim master of authority. A red-coated Highlander is formidable enough to cope with and drive away a crowd of Bengalis even in the very heart of the City of Palaces, while in the villages all shops and houses are closed at the very sight of a European soldier in his uniform. In fact, Bengal can well be governed by a handful of Native police-constables, especially when the Arms Act is in full

force. Unlike the military races of Upper India, or the border tribes, the Bengalis will never, even under the influence of the most aggravated wrongs and injuries, retaliate or resort to such a desperate court of appeal as war and murder.

English is the adopted language of a Bengali Babu. It is an instructive study to take a cursory view of the rapid progress of English education throughout India from the day when David Hare held out pecuniary inducements to Hindoo youths to attend his school, and Dr. Duff called in the aid of Rámmohan Roy to found the infant General Assembly's Institution, now developed into the largest College in India. Fifty years ago, who dreamt that a Native lad of sixteen or seventeen years of age would venture to traverse the perilous ocean and compete at the Civil Service Examination in England, paying no heed whatever to the manifold disadvantages arising from social persecution, and the rupture of domestic relations of the tenderest nature? When Bacon said that knowledge is power, he certainly did not mean physical but intellectual power. It is the irresistible influence of this power that has inspirited an Indian youth to appear at the English "open competition" for the purpose of winning academic spurs and entering a closely fenced service; it is the quickening influence of this power, combined with an enterprising spirit, that has gradually enabled a mere handful of English adventurers to convert a small factory into one of the vastest empires in the East. The gigantic strides that English education has made in India within a short time, have been the wonder of the age, the foundation-rock of India's ultimate emancipation,—socially, morally, and intellectually. Theprison-wall round the mind, which ages had reared and Bráhmanical teaching fortified, has been completely demolished; and not only men, but matronly zenana females have picked up a few crumbs of broken English words which they occasionally use in familiar conversation,—for instance, Dáktár, Rail, Talygraf, Guvner, Juj, Majister, High Cote, etc.

Some of the Bengali Babus read and write English with remarkable fluency, and the epistolary correspondence of most of them is commonly carried on in that language. When two or more educated Babus meet together, or take their constitutional walk in the morning, they perhaps talk of some leading articles in the Anglo-Indian or English journals or periodicals, and eagerly communicate to each other "the flotsam and jetsam of advanced European thought, the ripest outcome in the *Nineteenth Century*, or the aftermath in the *Fortnightly*," as if the vernacular dialect were not at all fitted for the communication of their ideas. It is a pity that the cultivation and improvement of a national literature—the embodiment of national thought and taste, and the chief means of national enlightenment—seldom or never engages their serious attention. But it is a great mistake to suppose that the large mass of the Indian population can be thoroughly instructed and reformed through the medium of a foreign language. The richness and copiousness of modern English, combining as it does conciseness with solidity and perspicuity, are admittedly very great ; it is admirably adapted for the educated *few*, but it is not equally suited to the capacity and comprehension of the *many*. It is incumbent, therefore, on all well-disposed Hindoos, who have the real welfare of their country at heart, to endeavour to enrich their national literature by transplanting into it the advanced thoughts of modern Europe, and to make their language more copious so as to remove its acknowledged deficiency and barrenness. Until this is done, it is as unreasonable to expect elegance and perfection in the national literature, as it is to expect harvest in seed-time, or the full vigor of manhood in the incipient state of childhood.

Assuredly the Bengalis are a race of *keranis*, or clerks, as Napoleon said, the English were a nation of shop-keepers. Every morning and evening, all the main streets of Calcutta leading tot he business quarters are literally thronged with dense crowds of *keranis* in their white cotton uniform, busily

making for their respective offices, either in tramway cars or in shabby-looking third-class hackney-carriages or on foot. A foreigner, not used to such sights, can hardly fail to come to the conclusion that the Bengalis are a nation of *keranis.* Every Government office, Railway office, and Merchant's office s filled with these Babus, either actually employed, or serving on probation, biding their time in fond expectation of picking up a slice of official bread, buttered or unbuttered. Even graduates of the Calcutta University do not hesitate to serve as apprentices, because a collegiate course does not teach the rules of official routine. Most of them are good copyists or clever accountants, while a few are correspondence clerks. As a rule, their pay is very small compared with what is given to English clerks, for reasons which I need not dilate upon here. Within the range of our experience, extending over fifty years, we remember only one Native gentleman—Babu Shama Charan Dey, the present vice-chairman of the Calcutta Municipality—who, by his tried ability, intelligence and integrity, has managed to climb to the top of keranidom. In recognition of his high efficiency, his salary has been raised to one thousand rupees a month, in spite of many instances of supersession. I, in common with others, am fully persuaded that, had he been a British-born Civilian, he would undoutedly have drawn a much larger salary. But it is useless to repine at a misfortune which is inevitable.

Even the amusements of a Bengali Babu are more or less anglicised. Instead of the traditional *Játtrás* (rude dramas) and *Kobis* (popular ballads), he has gradually imbibed a taste for theatrical performances; and native musical instruments are superseded by European flutes, concertinas and harmoniums, organs and piano-fortes. This is a decided improvement on the old antiquated system, demonstrating the gradual growth of a refined taste.

Thus we see that, in almost every phase of life, at home or abroad, the Bengali Babu is europeanized. In his style of

living, in his mode of dress, in his writings, in his public and private utterances, in his household arrangements and furniture, in his bearing and deportment, in his social intercourse, in his mental accomplishments, and in his passionate partiality for Western æsthetics, he is a modified Anglo-Indian. But it were devoutly to be wished that he possessed a larger admixture of the essential elements of the European character, truthfulness, energy and manliness of spirit, straightforwardness in his dealings with society, nobility of sentiment, magnanimity combined with simplicity, disinterested love and sympathy, and, above all, moral and spiritual elevation.

XVI.

THE KABIRÁJ, OR NATIVE PHYSICIAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING the rapid progress of medical science throughout the country since the establishment of the Calcutta Medical College, the practice of Hindoo *Kabirájes* and Mussulman *Hákims* still continues to find favour in the eyes of a large section of the Indian population. In Chemistry, Anatomy, Midwifery, and Surgery, the decided superiority of the English over the Native system is admitted by all. This is unquestionably an age of improvement; everything around us indicates the progressive development of arts and sciences, and a society that does not keep pace with the onward march of intellect is certainly much behind the age.

There was a time when upwards of sixteen original medical writers, some of whose works are still extant, flourished in India, and medicines prepared according to the formulas of the *Ayurveda*—the best standard medical work—were supposed to have produced wholesome results, affording no inconsiderable amount of relief to thousands afflicted with diseases of various kinds, and even of a most malignant character. Under the Hindoo dynasty, every encouragement was given to the cultivation and improvement of medical science. Next to the Bráhmans, the Vaida class were respected, though sometimes they are unjustly twitted with what is called a hybrid origin. It is, however, foreign to our purpose to determine this point, which seems to be enveloped in obscurity. The common theory on which the Hindoo system of physic is based, has reference to the country, the season and the age of

the patient, to which is superadded the regimen suited to his physical organization. The scientific and philosophical theory is, that there are certain defined elements in the human body on the natural equilibrium of which mainly depends the health of man. The disturbance of this normal equilibrium, either by the increase or decrease of any one of the essential ingredients, deranges the system, and requires the use of medicines, generally obtained from indigenous drugs, bark, root, wood, fruits, flowers, metals, &c.

From the existing medical works according to which medicines are prepared and cures effected, it is evident that the Hindoo system is not entirely destitute of science; but the light it is capable of diffusing is greatly dimmed by a combination of unfavourable circumstances brought about by the overthrow of the Hindoo dynasty, the decay of Hindoo learning in every branch of human knowledge, and the consequent growth of empiricism.

In his eleventh discourse before the Asiatic Society, that distinguished Orientalist, Sir William Jones, has said "Physic appears in these regions to have been from time immemorial, as we see it practised at this day by the Hindoos and Mussulmans, a mere empirical history of diseases and medicines." This is presumably a remark applicable to a society but little removed from a state of barbarism; but the existence of such scientific works as *Ayurveda*, *Nidan*, *Charrack-Swasru*, *Sarasangraha*, *Boidya*, *Sarvuswn*, &c., furnishes abundant proof that the Hindoo system of physic is not altogether founded on empiricism.

In 1838, the Honorable the East India Company appointed a Committee, consisting of Drs. Jackson, Rankin, Bramby, Pearson, W. B. O'Shaughnessy, and Mr. James Prinsep, to examine and report upon the state of the Honorable Company's Dispensaries, and the possibility of substituting native drugs for European medicines, the primary object being two-fold,—namely, cheapness and efficiency. Death, ill-health, and

the casualties of the service dispersed the Committee long before the members could accomplish the task imposed on them, and subsequently the whole charge devolved upon Dr. W. B. O'Shaughnessy, who, after the unwearied labour of four years, assisted by some of the best Native physicians, produced a work, entitled "The Bengal Dispensatory," published under the authority of the Government of India, which still remains a valuable monument of his indomitable zeal and untiring devotion to medical science.

Great attention has also been given to the scientific analysis of the various indigenous drugs by Roxburgh, Wallick, Ainslie, White, Arson, Royle, Pereira, Lindlay, Richard, &c., &c. The result of their analytical examination, though not so exhaustive as the very great importance of the subject required, was nevertheless very favourable to the opinion that the native system was based on fixed scientific principles, and that many of the drugs possessed great curative properties. Unfortunately the improved principles and important discoveries of modern Europe have not been sufficiently brought to bear on the simultaneous development of the native system. They have, however, proved greatly beneficial in teaching the native *kabirájes* to adopt, to a certain extent, the European method and regimé.

It is a remarkable fact that even now, when this science may be said to be in a retrogressive stage both for want of adequate culture and for want of sufficient encouragement, there are a few Hindoo *kabirájes** in this City, and in other parts of the country, whose treatment in chronic cases of fever, dysentery, diarrhœa, pulmonary consumption, asthma,

* The most popular and successful among them are, Ganga Prasad Sen, Chandra Kumár Rai, Gopi Bállabh Rai, Prasanna Chandra Sen, Brajendra Kumár Sen, Kálidás Sen, &c. They profess to practise on the principles of *Ayurveda*, the best standard work on Hindoo Medical Science, and their mode of treatment is much appreciated by respectable Hindoos.

&c., proves, in a great measure, successful. Hence in almost every respectable Hindoo family there is a competent *kabiráj*, who is always consulted in cases of a serious nature. It is generally considered that, on the subject of pulsation greater weight is attached to the opinion of a Hindoo *kabiráj* than to that of an English doctor. By the pulse, in the different parts of our physical organization, the state of the body may be ascertained, and suitable remedies applied. In cases of severe illness among the Hindoos, the friends of the patient have not only to help him in the struggle between life and death, but to closely watch for the last expiring flicker of vitality, that he may be removed in time to the banks of the sacred stream to insure his entrance into heaven.

It has been urged by some native physicians that the Sanskrit work *Ayurveda*, above-mentioned, treats of anatomy and the doctrine of the circulation of the blood. If this be true, great credit is doubtless due to its author for having made in a comparatively dark age such considerable advances in an important branch of medical science, without which medicine and surgery are of little avail. Chemistry, which enables us to distinguish the real properties of different substances, was certainly not unknown to the Hindoo physicians, because their medicines indicate a scientific selection of several ingredients mixed together to produce a certain result. But it can by no means be asserted that the people ever attained to such a knowledge, either in the one or the other, as can bear comparison with the perfection of the modern European system. In almost every department of human knowledge steady progress is, elsewhere, the grand characteristic of the age; but in this country unhappily a spirit of scientific investigation has very nearly been extinguished simply for want of adequate cultivation and support.

If quacks abound in enlightened Christendom, where chemical analysis, scientific researches in materia medica and pharmacy, and anatomical demonstration and surgical opera-

tions almost daily bring to light new discoveries and inventions, what can be expected in a country where medical science has long been in a state of absolute stagnation. Ignorant and unprincipled quacks, quite unacquainted with the rules of the Hindoo medical shastras, abound all over the country, which has for some years past been suffering severely from malarious fever of a virulent type, carrying death and devastation wherever it prevails.* They literally sport with the health of their patients, and the natural consequence is, that hundreds and thousands of human beings are mercilessly sacrificed to their ignorance and cupidity. Not one in a hundred of those who call themselves *kabirájes* is acquainted with the principles of physic as laid down in the standard medical works of the Hindoos. Some of them have a few nostrums of their own, the composition of which is unknown to every one but themselves.

A Bengali *kabiráj* carries a miniature dispensary about with him. He takes with him a small packet, containing different kinds of pills or powders, wrapped up in paper, in small doses, which are commonly used twice a day with ginger, honey, betel, roots of durva-grass, &c. He seldom uses phials; liquids, when required, are made in the patient's own house. His medicines are chiefly made of dried herbs, but he has neither a proper classification of them, nor a complete system

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* The general climate of Bengal has, for some years past, become very unhealthy; and as fever is the most prevalent epidemic in the Lower Provinces, Dr. D. N. Gupta's Mixture has become a patent medicine, proving efficacious in the majority of cases, so that the doctor is said to have made a very large fortune by the sale of it within a few years. As far as success is concerned, Dr. D. N. Gupta has become, on a small scale, the Holloway of Bengal. Several other Native Assistant-Surgeons have, from time to time, endeavoured to offer their anti-malarious mixture to the inhabitants of Lower Bengal, but they have signally failed in winning public confidence and favor. Attempts at counterfeit trade-marks have also been tried, but on conviction before a Court of Justice the guilty have been punished.

of botany. He uses, however, certain preparations of oil, which are sometimes beneficially administered in chronic cases. These preparations are rather expensive, selling from two to ten rupees per pound. Some of these *kabirájes* stand very high in Native public estimation. Almost every wealthy family in the country as well as in the Town has its own physician. A fee of a quack in the villages is one rupee on the first day of his visit, and he continues to attend twice daily until the patient recovers. When the patient has completely recovered, the physician gets one or two rupees more, a suit of clothes, and some provisions.

The introduction of English medicines into the interior, though not scientifically administered in every case, has very considerably affected the trade of the native quacks. Their occupation, it may be said, is nearly gone, because the doctors of the Bengali-class, more systematically trained in the Government Vernacular Colleges, have, in a manner, superseded them. In strong fevers, instead of compelling the patient to fast for twenty-one days or longer, and restricting his regimen to parched rice, the new Bengali-class doctor first reduces him by evacuations,* and then gives him either fever-mixture,

* The late indisposition of the Marquis of Ripon gave rise to many alarming rumours as to the probable turn and termination of the disease—malarious fever—with which he was unhappily attacked during his travels to and from Bombay, and which, according to telegraphic messages, had considerably weakened his constitution, and diminished the wonted activity and vigor of his mind. The antiquated notion that a violent attack of fever in a European in this country causes an abnormal depletion of the system by constant evacuations has still a strong hold on the popular mind. Hence an unfavourable view was generally taken as to the speedy and complete recovery of so good and beneficent a Governor-General, whose rule, though only just begun, has been happily inaugurated by several circumstances of a peculiarly hopeful character, tending, in no small degree, to make the people happy and contented even by anticipation. The termination of the ill-advised Afghan war, the few public utterances of his Lordship bearing on the future policy of the Government of

or cinchona-febrifuge, or quinine-mixture, as he thinks best. In place of warm applications—the quondam treatment of a kabiráj in strong fevers—he gives ice or cold water, thus relieving the patient from the effects of a merciless abstinence and excessive thirst. On the periodical return of the unhealthy season in Bengal,—*i. e.*, in the months of September, October, November, and December,—when the atmosphere is surcharged with a large quantity of vapour, these doctors generally reap a harvest of gain from their practice. It should be mentioned, however, that their imperfect knowledge and want of sufficient experience, are too often attended with the most disastrous results.

India for the general well-being of the subjects, and the sure prospect of an abundant harvest, and the consequent reduction of nearly fifty per cent. in the price of rice—the main staff of life in this country—have all combined to evoke a sincere desire and fervent hope among the people for the long continuance of a rule so nobly begun and beneficently administered. May undisturbed peace and undiminished plenty and prosperity be the distinguishing features of such a liberal, generous and pure administration, and may it end fitly what it has begun so auspiciously. In speaking thus favorably of the Marquis of Ripon's Government, I merely echo the sentiments of my countrymen from one end of the vast British Indian empire to the other.

XVII.

HINDOO FEMALES.

THE condition of a Hindoo female, partially described in the preceding pages, is really deplorable. The changes and vicissitudes to which her chequered life is subject are manifold. "There is a continuity of misery from the day of her birth to the day of her death,—*i.e.*, from the craddle to cremation." As strikingly put by a writer, "she is unwelcomed at her birth, untaught in childhood, enslaved when married, accursed as widow, unlamented when she dies." The celebration of the nuptials is the only occasion when the wife is allowed to eat with her husband. It is enjoined in the shastras that women are not much to be loved; let them, it is said, "have only that degree of affection which is necessary, let the fulness of affection be reserved for brothers and other similar connections." The wife "is to live for her husband, to work for him, to suffer for him, and to die with him." By all means, it is added, "if she survive him, she must remain a widow." Weak and frail as she assuredly is made by nature, the conventional forms and social usages to which she is religiously enjoined to adhere tend to deprive her alike of temporal and spiritual happiness. Born under unfavorable circumstances chiefly by reason of her sex, her life is rendered doubly miserable by the galling chains of ignorance and superstition. "Accursed was the day when a woman-child was born to me," was the emphatic exclamation of a Rájput when a female birth was announced. "The same motive," says Colonel Tod, "which studded Europe with convents, in which youth and

beauty were immured until liberated by death, first prompted the Rájput to infanticide: and, however revolting the policy, it is perhaps kindness compared with incarceration. There can be no doubt that monastic seclusion, practised by the Frisians in France, the Langobardi in Italy, and the Visigoths in Spain, was brought from Central Asia, the cradle of the Goths.* It is in fact a modification of the same feeling which characterizes the Rájput and the ancient German warrior,—the dread of dishonor to the fair: the former raises the poniard to the breast of his wife rather than witness her captivity, and he gives an opiate to the infant, whom, if he cannot portion and marry to her equal, he dare not see degraded." Descending from the lofty ideal of a chivalrous Rájput character to the more familiar portraiture of tame Hindoo life in Bengal, we find the same sad destiny is the portion of a female in both cases. "When a female is born, no anxious inquiries await the mother—no greetings welcome the new-comer, who appears an intruder on the scene, which often closes in the hour of its birth. But the very silence with which a female birth is accompanied forcibly expresses sorrow." In almost every stage of life, from infancy to old age, her existence presents a uniform picture of gloom, uncertainty, despondency, and neglect. Freedom of thought and independence of action—the natural birthrights of a rational being—are denied her, not by her Creator, but by a selfish, narrow-minded, and crafty priesthood.

* "The Ghikers, a Scythic race, inhabiting the banks of the Indus, at an early period of history, were given to infanticide." "It was a custom," says Ferishta, "as soon as a female child was born, to carry her to the market place, and there proclaim aloud, holding the child in one hand, and a knife in the other, that any one wanting a wife might have her ; otherwise she was immolated. By this means they had more men than women, which occasioned the custom of several husbands to one wife. When any husband visited her she set up a mark at the door, which being observed by the others, they withdrew till the signal was removed."

She is treated and disposed of as if she were entirely destitute of the feelings and ideas of a sentient being. She dare not emerge from the unhealthy seclusion of the closely confined *andarmahal*, or female apartment, where suspicions and jealousies, envy and malignity are not unfrequently brewing in the boiling caldron of domestic discord. Born within the precincts of an ill-ventilated zenana, and cooped up in the cage of an uncongenial cell, she is destined to breathe her last in the same unwholesome retreat.

A European lady can have no idea of the enormous amount of misery and privation to which the life of a Hindoo woman is subjected. In her case, the bitters far more than counterbalance the sweets of life. The natural helplessness of her condition, the abject wretchedness to which she is inevitably doomed, the utter prostration of her intellect, the ascendency of a dominant priesthood exacting unquestioning submission to its selfish doctrines, the unmerited neglect of an unsympathetic world, and the appalling hardships and austerities which she is condemned to endure in the event of the death of her lord, literally beggar description. All the graces and accomplishments with which she is blessed by nature, and which have a tendency to adorn and ennoble humanity, are in her case unreasonably denounced as unfeminine endowments and privileges, to assert which is a sacrilegious act.

If she is ever happy, she is happy in spite of the cruel ordinances of her lawgiver, and the still more cruel usages and institutions of her country. Manu, the greatest fountain of authority, has expressly inculcated the doctrine that no man other than a Bráhman should receive the blessings of knowledge; and much more severely was the rule enforced in the case of females, who were held to be naturally unfit for mental culture! It was worse than blasphemy to attempt to educate a female; she was born in ignorance, she must die in ignorance. All the horrors of a premature and certain widowhood were pictured forth to her eyes, were she to make an

effort to enlighten her mind.* How shamefully contracted were the views of the Hindoo lawgiver in respect of the progressive development of the human intellect! His prohibitory injunction was, and is now, more honored in the breach than in the observance.

From the moment a female child is brought into the world, a new source of anxiety arises in the minds of its parents, which becomes more and more intense as the girl advances in years. The thought of educating the child is not what troubles their heads; that is the thought which is furthest removed from their imagination. But the idea how to dispose of it in the world continually preys on their minds. The child, perfectly unconscious of the fate that awaits it, begins to handle the playthings set before it; and, as nature in almost every case works intuitively, it soon learns to make a miniature kitchen with earthen pots and pans, resembling that in which it has to spend the greater portion of its existence. It is a noteworthy fact that a Hindoo lady, even when placed in affluent circumstances, does not consider it beneath her dignity to take a part occasionally in the *cuisine*, or at least in

* The Hindoo lawgivers, whatever their shortcomings in other respects, showed a great insight into human nature when they looked more to women than to men for the stability of their doctrines. That the perpetual ignorance of the former promises a permanent harvest of gain to the hierarchy, is quite evident. If a correct return were available as to the number of pilgrims who periodically visit the different holy places throughout the country, it would doubtless establish the fact that upwards of two-thirds of such pilgrims are female. If it were not for their pertinacious adherence to their traditional faith, the Bráhmanical creed, at least in the great centres of education, would have long since fallen into desuetude. The blind unquestioning faith of the female devotees in their gods and goddesses is the great secret of the very high estimation in which they are still held. If we educate the females and gradually disabuse their minds of early prejudices, we not only lay the axe at the very root of idolatry, but pave the way for the ultimate recognition of the true religion.

making preparations for the same, though the family has professional cooks in its employ,—the principal object being to feed her husband and children with extra delicacies prepared with her own hand. Instead of idle and unprofitable talk and scandalous gossip, reflecting on the characters of others, such an occupation is deserving of commendation.*

When six or seven years of age, the mother endeavours to initiate the girl in the first course of simple *Bratas*, or religious vows, which are destined, as has been already shewn, to exercise a vast influence on her mind. The germs of superstition being thus sown so early take a deep root. Meanwhile the anxiety of the mother for her daughter's marriage increases with her growth. Numerous proposals are received and rejected, till at length a selection is made, according to the rules stated in a former sketch. In this manner, persons are married with as much indifference as cattle are yoked together; they are disposed of according to the judgment of their parents, without the parties, who are to live together till death, having the slightest opportunity of seeing each other, much less of studying each other's disposition.

If a female child possess, as is very rarely the case, finely chiselled features, embodying the ideal of a Hindoo beauty, the breast of the mother is freed from anxiety for a time, but for a time only. It may be she is congratulated on the birth

* The late Babu Rájballabh Rai Chowdhry, a very wealthy zemindar of Baripore, south of Calcutta, used, it was said, to bring up the girls of his family, which was almost a small colony, in the art of cooking all sorts of native dishes, from the highly spiced *polow* to simple *dall-bhat* and vegetable curry; he also taught them to bring up water for culinary purposes from a tank inside of the house in silver *gharas*, or pots. Though he possessed the most practical of all worldly advantages,—the power of the purse,—yet he did not hesitate to initiate the girls in the art of cooking, that they might be fully prepared to perform the duty in case of necessity. I can easily cite other instances of a similar nature, but I believe they are not necessary.

of so beautiful a child, and it is but natural that she should indulge in pleasant delusions about the future of her offspring. She looks forward to a match at once desirable and happy. Fed with such hopes, she cherishes many a fond idea of the wealth of joys in store for her daughter. But how often are our brightest hopes blasted by the ruthless hand of fortune.

If, on the contrary, the girl be deficient in beauty, the bosom of the mother is perpetually disturbed by gloomy forebodings, which no worldly advantage can effectually remove, no reasoning can sufficiently suppress. The reassuring admonition of sympathizing minds may sustain her spirits for a time; but whenever she is alone or disengaged from domestic duties, her mind involuntarily reverts to the future destiny of the girl. As day by day she grows older, and her features begin to assume a more decided cast, the deformity, which was but faintly perceived at first, becomes more striking. The mother herself, perhaps, being a living illustration of the fruitlessness of the attempts of her parents to secure for her a desirable match, naturally feels a strong misgiving as to the good fortune of her child.

While the hearts of the parents are thus filled with disquieting thoughts, the girl is perfectly unconscious of the fate that awaits her. She laughs and sports about, regardless of what is written on her forehead by the *Bidhátápurush*. The performance of the religious vow in her infancy, which has for its object to secure a good husband, might incidentally remind her of marriage; but the thought passes off in a moment, like the streaks of a morning cloud. Hence it has been justly said that the happiest days in the life of a Hindoo female are those preceding her marriage. If in Bengal, under the paternal care of a Christian Government, she is not permitted to become a victim to the poppy at her birth, or to the flames in her riper years, like her Rájput sister in times of yore, yet she is always exposed to the appalling hardships of a *bidhabá* life, or widowhood. Though too young to fully realize the

thousand and one evils of such a wretched existence, yet the living examples she daily and hourly sees around her make, to use a native phrase, "her hands and feet enter into her belly."

To those who have studied the existing state of Hindoo society, it is a matter no less of wonder than of gratulation that the system of early marriage notwithstanding the arbitrary manner in which it is consummated, and the utter absence of the voice and consent of the parties thus affianced deriding the very idea of the slightest opportunity being given them to study each other's disposition and habitude, should produce such a large amount of conjugal felicity, which is the fundamental object of this solemn compact. In every nation removed from barbarism, marriage is a recognized ordinance, sanctioned alike by the law of God and the law of man. It is a solemn covenant between a man and a woman to love each other through all the vicissitudes of life, till the union is dissolved by the death of either. We may go further and say that even then the tie of relationship does not become totally broken, inasmuch as the party surviving has to provide for the nurture and education of the children, should there be any. Such being the nature of the matrimonial engagement, it is next to impossible that a boy of fourteen wedded to a girl of nine should be capable of forming any adequate idea of its grave responsibility. The evil must work its own remedy with the general spread of education and the growth of a sound system of domestic and social economy, because the existing system is unhealthy and unnatural. It is useless to dilate on the evil consequences of early marriage: they are clearly apparent in the every-day life of a Hindoo.

Nature is so propitious to us in every respect that out of evil she brings good. When the woman, destitute as she is of the blessings of knowledge, becomes the mother of several children, she is raised to the rank of a governess, or in other words, she becomes a *ginni*, or female head of the family. To

all intents and purposes, she seems to understand her duties so thoroughly that almost instinctively she exercises a salutary control over a number of young girls, newly married, corrects all their improprieties of conduct, and teaches them to cherish feelings of mutual kindness, love, and affection.

In many cases, however, it must be acknowledged, the custom of having several families—all branches of the same stem—living together under one roof, is a fruitful source of evil, embittering the sweet enjoyments of a peaceful conjugal life. Where there is no harmony among the several female members of a family, the slightest misunderstanding occasions the bitterest quarrels, especially when there is no recognized *ginni*, or female head, to check the same, or reconcile the parties by her matronly advice. For instance, if one son in a family be well-to-do in the world, and another does not possess the same advantages, it is ten to one but the wife of the former constantly advises him to mess separately, if not to remove to a different house; and, as unequal combination is always disadvantageous to the weaker side, the poorer brother has to put up with slights and indignities which are oftentimes unbearable, and which terminate in a separation either in food or domicile. It is a well established fact that a woman is the principal cause of a disruption between brothers and other members of a family. Though woman is by nature mild, soft, kind, and flexible, yet she belies this nature when sordid self and mean avarice exert a dominant sway over her mind. Stinted in her culture and contracted in her views, Mammon is her god; and she looks to the welfare of her husband and of her own children as the chief end of her existence. She is naturally loath to give a share of the affection of her husband to a rival; she also cannot brook the idea of frittering away his earnings among his kindred. I have known the most affectionate and devoted of brothers not being able to see each other's face, under the all-powerful influence of petticoat government. A European becomes a housekeeper as soon as

he marries. The arrangement is an excellent one; and as educated Hindoos are very much disposed to imitate English manners, the practice, where feasible, is gradually gaining ground, despite the prevalence of the old patriarchal system throughout the greater part of the country. There is a common native saying, which runs thus: "as many brothers, so many abodes." It is to a certain extent a striking illustration of the existing state of things; harmony and peace can scarcely be found in a family where brothers are swayed, as they must be, by the irresistible influence of their wives.* To the credit of the patriarchal system, there still exist, in every part of the country, numerous families that scout the idea of segregation.

Turning from the dark to the bright side of the picture, it is gratifying to observe that, of late years, attention has been directed to, and laudable exertions are being made for, the education of Hindoo females. Nothing can compare in importance with the steady progress of this movement. After the movement had been begun by the Missionary Societies, the late Hon. Mr. Drinkwater Bethune gave it an important impetus from the side of Government. These examples have since been followed up by other devoted friends of native improvement, and the Government has fully recognized the paramount importance of the object. This combination of efforts has already produced the most gratifying results. That

* At the time of the *Charak Pújá*, or swinging festival, which takes place about the middle of April, the *Kansaris*, or braziers of Calcutta, were accustomed to make *Sangs*, or caricature-representations, of different sorts of familiar scenes, illustrative of the prevailing manners of the present age. In many cases they hit off the mark so admirably, that they cannot fail to make a deep impression on the popular mind. Among other representations they once exhibited a caricature of a son taking a wife on his shoulder, while dragging a mother by a rope round her neck, exemplifying thereby the respective estimation in which each is held.

there is among the females a growing desire for learning by the study of such elementary books, Bengali and English, as have a tendency to improve their understanding, is a patent fact. Not only young girls, whose age permits them to attend school, but grown-up women, who are confined within the precincts of a zenana, are alike influenced by this commendable desire. Almost every respectable Hindoo family in Calcútta has a Christian governess, who, besides imparting secular and Bible instruction, teaches all sorts of needle-work—an art in which considerable progress has been made within the last few years.* This is an indication of the growth of a refined taste, which is a great step towards the cause of national improvement. As we have said elsewhere, instead of spending their time in idle talk and unprofitable occupation, if not in unpleasant dissension, the women now vie with each other in producing works of art and usefulness; and as a matter of course the annual distribution of rewards is a great incentive to exertion. It is devoutly to be wished that this desire for learning and this taste for works of art should gradually spread and be appreciated throughout the length and breadth of the land. Out of Calcutta, however, the mass of the people of all ranks and of both sexes are still as remote from the influence of this improvement, as they were centuries ago.

It is a pity that Hindoo females are withdrawn from school the moment they are married; this is an insuperable obstacle to the full development of their mental powers. The progress made by some of them in the zenana is really very creditable, and challenges the commendation of all who have at heart the elevation of native female character. They are not only

* An annual fair, or *melá*, is held near Calcutta, at which the best specimens of needle-work, executed by Hindoo females, are exhibited and prizes awarded by European and Native gentlemen. Great credit is due to Babu Nobo Gopal Mitra, the editor of the "National Paper," now defunct, for this annual exhibition. Unfortunately the *melá* is languishing for want of sufficient public support.

assiduous in the cultivation of feminine graces and accomplishments, but their superior grasp of thought and language rank them with the literary women of their country's history. Some thirty years back the Hindoo women of Bengal were immersed in ignorance; they were represented as degraded beings incapable of improvement; not one in a thousand could read or write. But since proper steps have been taken to remove this national reproach, they have evinced an ardent desire to enrich their minds by a course of study which, though not yet profound, is well fitted to adorn female life. The English Church Mission, "The Scottish Ladies' Association," a department of the Church of Scotland Mission, the Free Church Mission, the American Mission, &c., are all doing an incalculable amount of good by their disinterested efforts to impart the blessings of knowledge to such zenana women as are precluded by marriage from attending school. The complete regeneration of India cannot be expected until the emancipation of the women is accomplished, practically proving to the world, as has been already done in a limited degree, the absurdity of Manu's interdict restraining them from cultivating their intellectual powers.

As a proof of the progress already made in the *higher* branches of female education, it is gratifying to be able to state that two young ladies passed the B. A. Examination of the Calcutta University at the end of last year. One of these was trained in the Bethune School, and the other in the Free Church Normal School. This examination represents a very considerable amount of acquirement. Several female candidates also passed the Entrance or Matriculation Examination at the same time. Similar progress has been reported from the Madras Presidency.

Authentic history furnishes abundant evidence of the former prevalence of female education in the country to a considerable extent, until Mahomedan oppression not only prevented Hindoo women from pursuing a literary career, but ultimately

drove them into a state of unhealthy seclusion for the preservation of their honor, which they valued more than life. In Rájputáná every respectable woman was instructed to read and write. Of their intellectual endowments and knowledge of mankind, whoever has had opportunities of conversing with them cannot fail to form a favorable impression.*

* "I have conversed for hours," says Colonel Tod, "with the Boondi queen-mother on the affairs of her government and welfare of her infant son, to whom I was left guardian by his dying father. She had adopted me as her brother: but the conversation was always in the presence of a third person in her confidence, and a curtain separated us. Her sentiments shewed invariably a correct and extensive knowledge, which was equally apparent in her letters, of which I had many. I could give many similar instances. The history of India is filled with anecdotes of able and valiant females. Ferishta, in his history, gives an animated picture of *Durgavati*, queen of Gurrah, defending the rights of her infant son against Akbar's ambition. Like another Boadicea, she headed her army, and fought a desperate battle with Asoph Khan, in which she was wounded and defeated; but scorning flight, or to survive the loss of independence, she, like the Roman of old in a similar predicament, slew herself on the field of battle."

The accomplished Mahratta lady—Roma Bai—who lately visited Calcutta, affords a remarkable example of an educated Hindoo woman. She is an excellent Sanskrit scholar, well read in the *Srimat Bhagbat.* Several Pandits were astonished at her wonderful acquirements. She is at present pursuing her study in America.

XVIII.

POLYGAMY.

IN this, as well as in some other eastern countries, polygamy has from time out of mind been in existence. That it is subversive of moral order and of conjugal felicity, is admitted by all who have paid the slightest degree of attention to the very many evil consequences of this unnatural institution. It is a violation of a just and divine law, opposed to the nurture and education of children, and inconsistent with the due equality of the sexes, alike socially and numerically. In every country where this obnoxious practice prevails and is dignified with the hallowed name of a social and religious ordinance, as is done in India, woman occupies a degraded position, and society is rude and unprogressive in its character. The most heinous crimes are committed without remorse, and conscience is seared, as it were, with a red-hot iron. "Nature has designed woman to be the equal of man as a moral and intellectual being; and confined to the exercise of her own proper duties as a wife and mother, she is placed in a favourable position as relates to her own happiness and the happiness of her husband." Much of the civilization of Europe is due to the high position of the fair sex in the social scale. Their education,—their capacity for rearing their children in orderly and virtuous habits,—their elevated conceptions of a Supreme Being,—their social and domestic manners,—the purity of their lives,—their natural tenderness and affection,—their freedom, and the moral influence

of their actions on society, give them a rank in no way inferior to that of the other sex. But, in this country, it is painful to realize that they are not only denied the inestimable blessings of a good education, but that their first Lawgiver has condemned them to a state of abject servitude. "Women have no business," says Manu, "with the text of the Veda; this is the law fully settled: having, therefore, no evidence of law, and no knowledge of expiatory texts, sinful women must be as foul as falsehood itself; and this is a fixed rule. Through their passion for men, their mutable temper, their want of settled affection, and their perverse nature (let them be guarded in this world ever so well), they soon become alienated from their husbands." Manu attributed to women "a love of their bed, of their seat, and of ornament, impure appetites, wrath, weak flexibility, desire of mischief, and bad conduct. Day and night must women be held by their protectors in a state of dependence." The national peculiarities of women were summed up the other day by a living writer:—"The English lady rides on horseback; the American flirts; the Frenchwoman studies her toilet; the German plunges deeply into the mysteries of cookery and philosophy; the Spaniard dances and uses her fan adroitly; the Italian loves with a rosary on her arm and billetdoux in her bosom; but it is reserved for the fair Russian to be a politician and a Hindoo zenana lady to live happily in a state of absolute dependence and submission." Apart from their practically servile condition, the apparent complacence with which polygamy is tolerated, and the facility with which a plurality of wives can be obtained, are circumstances which poison the perennial source of conjugal felicity, reduce women to a state of moral and intellectual degradation, and sap the very foundation of virtue. "A barren wife," says Manu, "may be superseded by another in the eighth year; she whose children are all dead, in the tenth; she who brings forth only daughters, in the eleventh year; she who speaks

unkindly, without delay." Ballál Sen, who, if I mistake not, first established the system of *Kulinism* in Bengal, and prescribed certain rules in favor of polygamy, was singularly deficient in foresight and wisdom, when he entirely overlooked the evil consequences inseparable from this monstrous matrimonial arrangement, so pregnant with mischief in whatever aspect we view it. Any artificial institution which is subversive of divine law, will, in the long run, prove highly detrimental to the best interests of society. The marriage of a man with but one wife is an arrangement which should never be departed from. To dispose of the ministering angels of our existence, without the slightest regard to their future happiness, by yoking several of them to an unprincipled libertine, or to a Kulin perhaps on the verge of the grave, is a system destructive of all social, benevolent, and humane feelings. A Kulin has no regard, much less sympathy, for any one of his numerous wives; on the contrary, he looks to them for gain and other worldly advantages. Kulin wives, after their marriage, almost invariably continue to live with their parents, thus virtually closing all avenues to the growth of affection between the husband and the wife. The one is as estranged from the other as if there had been no bond of union between them. As the temptations to vicious indulgence are so very powerful and numerous in this wicked world of ours, the unscrupulous Kulin females of the sacerdotal class often sacrifice chastity upon the altar of sensuality. The perpetration of the most horrible crimes is the necessary result. The fault does not rest so much with the poor unfortunate females, as with the diabolical system which openly tolerates and religiously upholds polygamy. That it is an unnatural state, even the most thoughtless will readily admit. In every case it is the source of perpetual disputes and misery. Domestic happiness can have no place in a family in which more than one wife lives. I have known many a person who, under the impulse of passion, had entered into this unnatural state

deplore it as the greatest of all domestic afflictions. Even separate cook-rooms, separate apartments, and separate *mehals*, and dining and sleeping alternately with the two wives with the greatest punctuality, and giving the same sets of ornaments to both, were not enough to ensure harmony and peace. Indeed, it has become a proverb among the Hindoos, that "one wife would rather go with her husband to the gloomy regions of *Yama* (Pluto), than see him sit with the other." As has already been mentioned, a tender girl of five years of age is, as her *first* instruction before emerging from the nursery, initiated into the *Brata*, or religious vow, of *Sajuti*, the primary object of which is the ruin and destruction of a *Satin*, or rival wife. The germs of jealousy and hatred against a rival being sown so early, take deep root and expand in time so as to become absolutely ineradicable.

When the presence of only two wives in the same house is attended with so much disquietude, the evil arising from the practices of professional Kulins is much greater. They are each married to a great number of females whose prospect of connubial bliss is as remote from fulfilment as the poles are asunder. Instead of true love and genuine attachment, the legitimate conditions of matrimony, the natural apathy of the husband is often requited by the infidelity of his numerous wives. Nor can it be otherwise, the visits of the husband being, like those of a comet, few and short. Destitute of the finer susceptibilities of human nature, and looking upon matrimony as a matter of traffic, he regards his wives as so many puppets whose happiness is not at all identified with his own. Influenced by a sordid love of gain, bred and brought up in the lap of ignorance and laziness, and pampered by effeminate habits, he leads a profligate life of utter demoralization. He cares as little for the chastity of his wives as a child does for the nicety of his playthings. By birth, profession, and habit he is a debauchee. His sense of female honor is totally blunted. The thought of nurturing and educating his numer-

ous children never enters into his mind. He knows not how many sons and daughters he has, whether legitimate or illegitimate; he is not capable of recognizing them, for he has seldom or never seen their faces. If he keeps a register of the number of his wives, he keeps no record of the number of his children. When he wants money, he pounces on such a father-in-law as can satisfy him. If he keeps one wife at home, it is not from warmth of affection, but merely for his own convenience and comfort; she is made to discharge all the menial offices of a domestic maid-servant. Though never placed in affluent circumstances, yet he is the lord of thirty, forty, or fifty women. It has been very aptly remarked by a eminent writer who had paid much attention to the manners and customs of the Hindoos,—that "amongst the Turks, seraglios are confined to men of wealth; but here, a Hindoo Bráhman, possessing only a shred of cloth and a piece of thread (*poitá*), keeps more than a hundred mistresses." Indeed, such a system of monstrous polygàmy is without a parallel in the history of human depravity. Prostitution, adultery, and the horrible crime of procuring abortion by means of drugs administered by old women, are the inevitable consequences of this unnatural state of things. It is undeniable that the daughters of Kulin Bráhmans, abandoned by their unprincipled husbands, are often led into the forbidden paths of life, partly through the impulse of passion amidst the seductions of a wicked world, and partly through their exceedingly miserable circumstances. The houses of ill-fame in Calcutta and other large towns are filled with women of this character. Some fifty years ago a number of respectable Hindoos felt so disgusted at the mischievous tendency of the Kulin system of marriage, that they were on the eve of memorializing the Government to put down the practice by a legislative enactment, like the prohibition of *sati*, or female immolation; but they were assured that the authorities would not interfere in the domestic and social usages of the people.

It is gratifying to observe, however, that the growth of intelligence has of late years greatly counteracted this monstrous evil. If the rulers will not, by the denunciation of the severest penalties, attempt to abolish a social system opposed to the feelings of natural affection, the good sense of the people who suffer by it must be appealed to for its total suppression.

The following extract from Mr. Ward's excellent work on the Hindoos will give the reader an idea of the fearful extent to which Kulinism prevailed in Bengal some fifty or sixty years back, when English education could scarcely be said to have commenced the work of reformation or rather disintegration:—

"Notwithstanding the predilection for *kulins*, they are more corrupt in their manners than any of the Hindoos. I have heard of a Kulin Bráhman, who, after marrying sixty-five wives, carried off another man's wife by personating her husband. Many of the Kulins have a numerous posterity. I select five examples, though they might easily be multiplied: Udai Chandra, a Bráhman, late of Bágnápárá, had sixty-five wives, by whom he had forty-one sons and twenty-five daughters. Rámkinkar, a Bráhman, late of Kushda, had seventy-two wives, thirty-two sons, and twenty-seven daughters. Vishurâm, a Bráhman, late of Gondolpárá, had sixty wives, twenty-five sons, and fifteen daughters. Gauri Charan, a Bráhman, late of Tribani, had forty-five wives, thirty-two sons, and sixteen daughters. Ramákánt, a Bráhman, late of Bhusdarani, had eighty-two wives, eighteen sons, and twenty-six daughters; this man died about the year 1810, at the age of 85 years or more, and was married, for the last time, only three months before his death. Most of these marriages are sought after by the relations of the female to keep up the honor of their families; and the children of these marriages invariably remain with their mothers, and are maintained by the relations of these females. In some cases, a Kulin father does not know his own children." Another instance bearing

on the subject has been recently brought to my notice. Rámchandra Mukerji, of Hooghly, had thirty-two wives, thirteen sons, and fifteen daughters. He was sixty-five years old when he suffered very much from acute consumption, with which he was afflicted several years back. One of his sons, who lived with him, becoming hopeless, as the symptoms became more alarming, asked the father in a despondent spirit as to what he should do in the event of the worst befalling him. He has no means, he added, to meet the expense, whatever it be, of a *shrad*, or funeral ceremony. The dying father, after pondering for a few minutes, suggested without compunction that arrangements should be made without any delay for his (father's) marriage with the daughter of Nobo Gopal Chatterjee, a girl of nine years of age, which was proposed a short time back. The father of the girl offered to give Rámchandra Mukerji a sum of two hundred and fifty rupees which he had scraped together with great difficulty. In terms of the contract, the marriage was duly solemnized, and the money paid. Thus a provision was made for the funeral ceremony of the father, who, as was expected, died six months after this his last marriage. Can anything be more recklessly cruel and inhumane? It would be a glorious day for India when polygamy is rooted out of the country and widow marriage legalized.

Not only the rules of caste, but *poverty* is also a great barrier to the marriage of Kulin women, as of poor women everywhere,—a fact which has been very feelingly deplored in the following lines in which maidenly anxiety finds a natural vent:—

> "Out spake the bride's sister,
> As she came frae the byre,
> O! gin I were but married,
> It's a' that I desire;
> But we poor folk maun live single,
> And do the best we can,
> I dinna care what I should want
> If I could but get a man."

Another song says:

> "And O! what will come o' me?
> And O! what will I do?
> That sic a braw lassie as I
> Should die for a wooer, I trow."

When Ballál Sen first introduced this obnoxious system, which went under the euphonious title of the Order of Merit, he little anticipated that the very small seed of mischief he then planted would soon grow into a luxuriant tree, and produce an abundant crop of evils, poisoning the very source of domestic felicity. It requires no depth of thought to predict that the evil is destined to die a natural death, as all such social evils are fated to do, when ignorance and superstition are driven into their congenial darkness. Though many a Hindoo still lives in the sin of polygamy without any particular repentance, yet the irresistible progress of virtue, like that of truth, will ultimately teach him that it is an unsafe foundation on which to build the sober structure of domestic happiness.

The details of the following conversation between a husband, his old mother, and his two wives, placed at the disposal of the writer by a friend, may not be out of place:—

"What is this noise for?" exclaims Rádhámani, the widowed mother, coming out of the *thákurghar*, in which she was worshipping; "this noise, this tumult, this quarrel, this wringing of the hands, these curses will surely drive away *Lakshmi* from the house; it is enough to make the devil fly; you have lost every sense of shame, *mágo má*; your clamour has deafened my ears; where shall I go? One is apt to leave her clothes behind. You have been served right: it was only the other day that Grish (name of the son) lost 5,000 rupees in a case at the Barra Adalat (High Court). If I be a *sati* (chaste woman), I say, you two women (pointing to the two wives) will be beggared and reduced to the condition of *haris* (those who carry away nightsoil). In what unlucky hour did these two women enter the house? You are both *Rakshasis*

(female cannibals). Day by day, sorrow is eating into the vitals of my son; his golden body is being darkened every day. Oh! *Bidhátá* (God), you have ordained this for me; Alango (name of the maid-servant), what is the cause of this uproar?" asks the mother. "*Má*, what shall I say," replies the maid-servant; "the cook gave the boiled rice *first* to Komal" (name of the daughter of the first wife). "Is this all? nothing more?" continues the mother; "my Báchhá (child) has had no food for seven days, being ill with fever. You all know this; the *kabiráj* (physician) this morning ordered some rice for her." Whereupon the second wife, all this while roaring and bawling, cursing and swearing, steps forward and says: "It is past nine, and my Harri (her son's name, 12 years old) has not yet got a morsel; his belly has shrunk, and the school time is come; if he is late, his master will make him stand." Rádhámani, the old mother, or *ginni*, sends for the cook, and enquires if the rice is ready. "Yes, *má*, Hari Babu came into the cook-room half an hour ago and I asked him to take his breakfast; *Chhoto má* (second wife) forbade him, because I gave some rice *first* to Komal, who was so long ill." "Where is Hari now?" enquires the old lady. The maid-servant replies, "*Chhoto má* gave him a few pice and told him to go to school, though he could have eaten his rice if he had liked." "Wait till Grish comes home," says the old lady, "and I will tell him to send me to Benares without delay; I am sick of your incessant broils; for giving Komal rice *first* you two *Baus* fall into a quarrel, and curse each other so fearfully, that you, *Barra bau* (first wife), have eaten the head of Hari, and you, *Chhoto bau* (second wife), have eaten the head of Komal's husband."*

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* Eating the head means wishing death. When two rival wives fall out, they literally become mad through anger and jealousy. With frantic gestures and dishevelled locks they abuse and curse each other most violently.

It was evening when Grish, the son, returned home from office. Before he had time to take off his office-dress, the old mother, impatient to tell him what had occurred during the day, with tears in her eyes, thus addressed him: "My son, you have brought the greatest curse on yourself by marrying two wives; to-day the whole family has been starving, and why? because Komal, suffering from fever for the last eight days, got a little rice this morning, and she ate *first; Chhoto bau*, therefore, forbade her son to eat anything, and sent the little *bachha* to school without his rice. From what *páji* (mean) families have you brought these two women? I can no longer remain in the house. Under the slightest pretext, like infamous wenches, they not only brawl but curse each other, and the son and son-in-law into the bargain. Can *Lakshmi* dwell in such a house? Send me to Benares instantly, I can no longer live in such a hell of a place. Your wives have made it a regular hell." The son consoled the old mother, promising that everything should be done according to her wish, begging her at the same time to eat something and adding that he did not mind whether his two wives ate or not. After going through the evening service, he slept outside that night, pondering what should be done for the future quiet of the family. Next day, imagining that one hand alone can never make a clap, he removed the first wife to her father's house, because the second wife was always *Zabardast.* But he was sadly mistaken, the deserted wife, continually brooding over her misfortune, at length resolved to put an end to her existence; and accordingly one night she took an overdose of opium, and bade a final adieu to the world.

This story is founded on real life, and should serve as a warning to those who, under the impulse of passion, blindly run into polygamy, which is undoubtedly one of the greatest domestic evils among the Natives. But it is worthy of remark that this abominable practice is fast dying out in Bengal.

XIX.

HINDOO WIDOWS.

THE system of early marriage, and the barbarous institution of condemning a Hindoo female to perpetual widowhood after the death of her husband, are evils which cannot be too strongly deprecated. This enforced widowhood is the bitterest ingredient in the cup of sorrow, which woman in India is called to drink. By surrendering herself to be burned on the funeral pile along with her husband, the highest merit was acquired. This cannot now be secured. Instead, she has to submit to a worse fate, even to a living death in the recesses of a zenana. Widowhood is regarded as a condition of reproach and disgrace, and therefore it is one of the bitterest calamities that can befall her. The life of a Hindoo widow, especially if, as happens in the case of many of them, she falls into this state while still young, is one of extreme wretchedness. She is the domestic drudge. Not unfrequently does she in substance pray, "Oh! gods and goddesses, let me die; I choose rather to die than to live." Her woes, it has been said, never have been, never can be, fully told. Her sad lot is well described in the following lines:—

> "And death and life she hated equally,
> And nothing saw for her despair,
> But dreadful time, dreadful etérnity,
> No comfort anywhere."

In this country, owing to the prevalence of early marriage, and the manner in which it is carried out, a Hindoo does not

become a housekeeper immediately upon his marriage. The wife generally remains one or two years with her parents, occasionally going to her father-in-law's house for a few days only; her husband pays her a visit now and then, but not without the special invitation of his mother-in-law. The object of such an invitation is evidently to make the son-in-law behave well towards her daughter. For the attainment of this object, as I have stated before, no means is left untried. Indeed, it has become a proverb among the Hindoos, when a man fares sumptuously, to say that he has been fed with all the fondness shown to a son-in-law. It has always struck me that if a Hindoo female were permitted to marry again after the death of her first husband, the affection of a mother-in-law for a son-in-law would not be so warm as it is under the existing state of things, which admits of no alternative.

Living under the paternal roof for one or two years after her marriage, a Hindoo girl sometimes becomes a widow,*— a state of life which is unspeakably miserable. When a young female of ten or eleven years of age loses her husband, with whom perhaps she has scarcely exchanged a single word, she is quite unconscious of the unmitigated misery she is fated to endure for the remainder of her long existence.† Deplo-

* Such a widow is called a *Korayraur*, or one who has never enjoyed the company of her husband. A stronger term of female reproach can scarcely be found in the Hindoo vocabulary. From the day this terrible bereavement occurs, she is constrained by conventional rules to put off from her wrist the *iron bangle*; but owing to her tender age she is permitted to continue to wear the gold bangle and a bordered *Sári* cloth. She is forbidden to use fish—her favorite dish; and she must partially fast on every *ekadasi*, or eleventh day of the increase or decrease of the moon. When she arrives at the age of twenty, her life presents an unvaried picture of despair and wretchedness. She then becomes a regular widow

† It has been remarked, and I believe it is in most cases borne out by facts, that a Hindoo widow generally lives to a very great age.

rable as such a condition of necessity is, it becomes doubly miserable from the cold, uncongenial, and unsympathetic atmosphere by which she is surrounded, and the careless neglect with which she is treated ever afterwards. Who, except a mother, can adequately conceive the thousand and one miseries which are in store for the widowed girl? It is a gloomy picture from beginning to end, and the gloom deepens as time rolls over her devoted head. Cursed be the name of the lawgiver who has made such a cruel ordinance, and cursed the society that has become a thrall to it! In opposition to the feelings of humanity and natural affection, the divine lawgiver of the Hindoos, Manu, expressly declares, that "although the state of widowhood might be deemed onerous by the fair sex of the west, it would be considered little hardship in the east. Let her emaciate her body, by living voluntarily on pure flowers, roots and fruits, but let her not, when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name

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Her simple and abstemious habits, her devotional spirit. her scanty meal once a day, her abstinence from food of any kind on the eleventh day of the increase and decrease of the moon, besides other days of close fasting, neutralising in a great measure the effects of every kind of irregularity, and the fearful amount of hardships she is accustomed to endure,—all contribute to prolong her existence. Surely her life may be said to extend in the direct ratio of her misery. It is a common expression used by a Hindoo widow, shewing her contempt of life, "shall I ever die? *Yama*, Pluto, seems to have forgotten me?". If the statistics of the land are consulted, it will assuredly be found that Hindoo widows enjoy a longer life than the adult male population, because the latter are subject to irregularities and other adverse contingencies of life, from which the former are almost entirely free. It is not uncommon to see a Hindoo widow of eighty, ninety or a hundred years of age. In short, nature evidently seems to have exemplified in her the symbol of misery associated with longevity.

It is also a remarkable fact that idolatry and superstition owe their continued influence chiefly to the widespread ignorance of these female devotees. At a religious festival, nearly three-fourths of the assembly are composed of widows.

of another man. A virtuous wife ascends to heaven, if, after the decease of her lord, she devotes herself to pious austerity; but a widow, who slights her deceased husband by *marrying again*, brings disgrace on herself here below, and shall be excluded from the seat of her lord. Abstinence from the common pursuits of life, and entire self-denial, are rewarded with high renown in this world, and in the next with a share in the abode of her lord, and procure for her the title of *sádhví*, or the virtuous." From this it is evident that perpetual widowhood has prevailed in this country from time out of mind. Its mischievous tendency is apparent in the corrupt and degraded state of female society. We can never thoroughly conquer nature; we can never restrain our passions so effectually as to render ourselves proof against temptation. However sedulously a mother may guard the virtue of her widowed daughter, and however forcibly she may inculcate the duty of purity of life and manners, it proves but a feeble barrier against the irresistible impulse of passion. Numerous instances are on record proving the utter futility of human efforts to contend successfully against nature in this respect. A young widow may be sent to the holy cities of Benares* and Brindában, with her mother or grandmother, to spend the remainder of her days in isolated seclusion and religious services, but this is a poor safeguard for the preservation of constancy and virtue. Volume after volume has been written on the subject, denouncing in an unmistakable manner the monstrous perversity of the existing system, but the evil has taken such a deep root in the social economy of the people, that the utmost exertions must yet be put forth before it can be wholly eradicated.

The evils of widowhood are not only confined to the endur-

* It is destined to close the troubled, wearisome, and melancholy pilgrimage of life of many a broken-hearted widow, because the far-famed City is regarded as the holiest spot which the earth contained—the *Kaaba* of the world.

ance of accumulated hardships and self-denials enough to rend asunder the strongest chords of humanity, but they likewise extend to unlawful connections, and the perpetration of another crime no less revolting than infanticide itself. Many respectable families, which are otherwise esteemed for their meritorious actions, have more or less sunk in honor from this indelible stigma; a few have even lost their caste and status in society from the same cause. In the primitive state of Hindoo society, when every woman other than a wife was regarded either as a mother or a sister, according to her age, irregular intercourse was almost unknown; but in these days of libertinism, perfect purity of life is rarely known. Our divine lawgiver, with a view to the interests of humanity and female honor, ought to have lent his authority and sanction to a system of widow marriage within a reasonable age. Some such edict would have been alike honorable to our venerable sage, and beneficial to those who are morally and socially most deeply concerned; but unfortunately his cruel ordinances, running counter to the fundamental principles of nature and morality, have necessarily engendered a rank crop of evils, undermining the very foundation of human happiness.

The benevolent exertions of that high priest of Nature, Pandit Iswara Chandra Vidyaságar, of Babu Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahmo apostle, and of other Hindoo reformers, to promote the cause of widow marriage in particular, and female emancipation in general, have not, unfortunately, been attended with the measure of success they deserve, simply because the state of Hindoo society is not yet ripe for the innovation. I am, however, sanguine in my expectation that, at no very distant future, the progress of enlightenment will bring about the consummation so devoutly to be wished for. It is for the advanced pioneers of progress to endeavour to remove the obstacles which time and Bráhmanical teachings have formed, and which tradition and custom have enshrined

with jealous and sedulous care. Until this is done, a Hindoo widow must continue to mourn her lot, amidst the denunciations of a heartless world. Sighs will never cease to flow from her heart so long as she finds herself deprived of the master charm of life. She is now cast amongst the dregs and tatters of humanity. Bereft of the *substance* of what endears life to a female, she is constrained to cleave to the *shadow*, which is destined to leave her when she leaves the light of life. Losing all hope of worldly enjoyments, she deposits the treasures of her heart in the sanctuary of religion, convinced that to sell the world for the life to come is profitable. It is terrible to contemplate the awful amount of physical and mental suffering, with all its varied complications, to which she is doomed; her life is a steadfast battle against misery; her soul soars in a vacuum where all is unreal, empty and hollow; and all the sweet enjoyments of life fall flat on her taste. Her struggle is never over. She is like a weary swimmer who throws himself on his back and floats, because he is too much exhausted to swim any longer, yet will not sink and let the cold and merciless water close over his head. From the day she loses her husband, she has a new lease of life, and a miserable lease it must be. She will not cease to lament until her soul itself shall die. If joy was once her portion, it lighted on her as the bird rests on the tree in passing and immediately takes wing again; and she would now say, her existence is so unlike life that death to her is sweet. She is a poor fallen outcast of humanity. No one can enter into her feelings or views of things. She has no influence, no control over herself; she cannot turn over a new leaf within her own mind. Though society is almost a necessity of human existence, yet she lives wholly alone; a cheerless train of thoughts always haunts her mind; she feels a dismal void in her heart; she finds herself cut off at once and for ever from one most dear to her; no conversation, however pleasant, can bring her consolation, or cheat her grief. The tide of settled melancholy threatens her

reason. As an outcast, she is religiously forbidden to take a part in any of the social and domestic concerns of life, tending to relieve the ennui of a wearisome existence, and to cheer the mind for a while. She is a living example of an angel, sent by heaven to minister to the comfort of man, changed by a cruel institution into a curse. Estranged from the affection of those who are nearest and dearest to her, she passes her days like a recluse, quite apart from the communion of society. She stares and gazes wildly at every festive celebration, while, as the poet sings,

> "The glad circle round them yield their souls
> To festive mirth and wit that knows no gall."

If she has irrepressible longings and insatiable cravings to lend her hand to any *shuva karma* (meritorious work), her widowed condition interposes an insurmountable barrier to her participation therein, as if everything would be desecrated when touched by her polluted hand.

As a sentient being, endowed with all the finer susceptibilities of human nature, is it possible that the young widow should so far forget herself as not to feel the bitterest pangs of despondency at her hopelessly forlorn condition? Driven from the genial atmosphere of the social circle, she drags a loathsome existence in this selfish and unsympathetic world. Who except her mother will deign to look upon her with love and affection? Instead of being regarded as the soul of simplicity, a living picture of sweet innocence, she is shunned as one whose very presence portends evil. If she possesses unaffected modesty and a keen sense of honor and virtue, who is to recognize and appreciate these amiable qualities, in a society which is preposterously estranged from all natural susceptibilities? If she has riches, what can they avail her, a poor misguided victim of superstition!* Her charity, instead of being

* The worship of *Jagatdhátri* (mother of the world) is performed by a widow for four years successively to forfend the calamity of widowhood in the next birth.

founded on the catholic principles of genuine liberality shewing a discriminating breadth of view, too often exhibits an unhappy exclusiveness in the performance of idolatrous ceremonies. If her own character is natural, it is her misfortune to be surrounded by conventional restrictions, which render her life a visible embodiment of helpless misery and anguish; and if she ever appeals, she appeals to the Being who is the only friend of the hopeless and the poor. To attempt to reconcile a widow to her forlorn lot is to tell a patient burning with fever not to be thirsty. Her days are dismal, her nights are dreary.

It was the dread of widowhood, and of the life-long miseries inseparable from it, that led fifty wives at a time to ascend the funeral pyre of a Rájput husband, with all the composure of a philosophic mind. It redounds greatly to the credit of the British Government that its generous exertions have not only struck the death-knell of this inhuman practice, even in the remotest corner of the Empire, but, what is more commendable, endeavoured "to heal the wounds of a country bleeding at every pore from the fangs of superstition."

Not content with depriving her of the best enjoyments of life which society affords, and the laws of God sanction, by condemning her to a state of perpetual widowhood, the great Lawgiver—the unflinching foe of female freedom—has further enjoined the strict observance of certain practices that add gall to her already overflowing cup of misery. As has been observed before, she is restricted to one scanty meal a day, always of the coarsest description, without fish,* which is generally more

* It should be mentioned here that, except the widows of the Bráhmans and Káyasthas of Bengal, those of the lower orders continue to use fish without any scruple. It is a remarkable fact that Hindoo *women* are more fond of fish than *men* are. There are some men, especially among the *Vaishnabas*, followers of Krishna, who feel an abhorrence to eat fish at all, by reason of its offensive smell; but there is not a single woman whose husband is alive that will live without it. When

esteemed by an *ayistri* lady than any other article of food in her bill-of-fare. She must religiously fast on every *ekádasi*, twice a month, and on all other popular religious celebrations. She must strip her body of all sorts of ornaments, even the *iron* and the *gold* bangles, which once constituted the highest joy of her life. As an appropriate substitute for the gold and pearl necklaces, she is enjoined to wear a *tulsi málá* (a basil-wood chaplet), and count a *tulsi*-wood rosary for the final rest of her soul. She is prohibited from wearing any clothes with a colored border, a *thayti* (cloth without border) being her proper garment: she is not permitted to daub her forehead with *sindur* (vermillion), once the pride of her life when her lord was alive; she is forbidden to use any bazar-made article of food; and, to complete the catalogue of restrictions, she sometimes shaves her head purposely, that she may have an ugly appearance and thereby more effectually repel the inroads of a wicked, seductive world.

If she has any children to bring up, the happy circumstance affords a great relief to her wearisomely monotonous life. Day and night she watches them with great care, and looks forward to their progressive development with intense anxiety, forgetting in the plenitude of her solicitude for them her own forlorn condition. Should there be any mishap in their case, it causes an irreparable break-down in her spirit, which is for ever "sicklied over with the pale cast of thought."

It is a painful fact that riches when not properly used have a tendency to corrupt the minds of human beings, and lead them from the path of virtue into that of vice. A widow, who has the command of a long purse, more readily falls a prey to the temptations of the world than one who, moving in a humbler sphere of life, has her mind almost wholly engrossed

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a girl becomes a widow, she can hardly take half the quantity of rice she was accustomed to take before, for want of this, to her, necessary article of food.

with domestic cares and the thoughts of a future state of beatitude. "Verily," as Lord Lytton says, "in the domain of poverty there is God's word."

But a striking example of singular self-denial of a very respectable Hindoo widow of the Ghosh family of Calcutta has been sometime since communicated to the author, and he has had ample opportunities of attesting the truth of the statement. She has indeed "endured a great fight of afflictions," and is highly admired for her extraordinary simplicity. Though possessed of immense wealth, being the mistress of a colossal fortune, yet nothing is more abhorrent from her feelings than the least approach to whatever has the remotest appearance of luxury or the common conveniences of life. She is a true type of an exemplary Hindoo widow, whose mode of life, bordering almost on real asceticism, is strictly in accordance with the rigorous injunctions prescribed for Hindoo widows in the shastras, to which allusion has been made elsewhere. Renouncing all the pleasures of the world, she literally lives on six rupees, or 12 shillings, a month, though her income is, I am told, about £12,000 per annum. Every day she lives, she lives a whole volume of true self-denial, assiduously cultivating the most sacred charities of private life so congenial to a purely unassuming character. Indeed, there was the least pretension where there was the most acknowledged title to respect and admiration.

Considering the endless round of hardship and self-abnegations to which she is inevitably doomed by a terrible stroke of fortune, "which scathes and scorches her soul," it is cheering to reflect that she so often shines brightest in adversity. Indeed she may be occasionally said "to die ten times a day;" but her incredible powers of patient endurance, coupled with her high sense of female honor, are deserving of the highest admiration.

XX.

SICKNESS, DEATH, AND *SHRADDHA*, OR FUNERAL CEREMONY.

AS I have said at the beginning that a Hindoo lives religiously and dies religiously, so his last days are attended with a degree of melancholy interest which is characteristic of the religion which he professes, as well as of the race to which he belongs. When a Hindoo becomes seriously ill, the first thing he does is to consult the almanac as to the stellar mansion of the period, and engage the officiating priest to perform a series of religious atonements, called *sastyána*, for the propitiation of the evil spirit and the restoration of health. The mornings and evenings are dedicated to the service; and the mother or the wife of the patient, as the case may be, makes a vow to the gods, promising to present suitable offerings on his recovery; for which purpose a small sum of money is laid aside as a tangible proof of sincerity. If the patient should be a useful member of the family, enjoying a good income, greater solicitude is naturally manifested for him than for an unproductive member; it being not uncommon that a whole family, consisting of eight or ten persons, male and female, depend for their sustenance on the earnings of a single individual,—the inevitable result of a joint Hindoo family. It is customary among the Hindoos, as it is among other civilized nations, that, when a person is ill, his friends and relatives come to see and console him. The sick man generally remains in the inner apartment of the house, where the females—the ministering angels of life — watch him and minister

to his comfort. When visitors enter the room, they go away for a time; but it must be mentioned that they are not wanting in attention, kind-heartedness, and careful nursing. Days and nights of watching pass over their heads without a murmur; prayers are continually offered to the guardian deity for a favorable turn in the fortune of the family; and available supernatural agency is secretly employed for the attainment of the end. The following conversation will give some idea of the melancholy scene :—

Rámkánto, a neighbour, enters the room, and gently accosts Mohan, the son of the patient.

Rámkánto, sitting down, asks,—"How is your father? I see he is very much pulled down. The weather is very bad; I hear of sickness on all sides. When did he get ill? Have you seen the almanac? Have you arranged for *sastyána* (religious atonement)? Don't you despair. He will get well, through the blessing of God. Who attends him?"

"Brajabandhu (a doctor)," replies Mohan.

Rámkánto. Yes, he is a good doctor; but you must have a good *Kabiráj* also (native physician), who understands the *nari* (pulse) well. These English doctors do not much care about the pulse."

Mohan. "Well, sir, I have engaged Gopiballabh (a native physician) to feel the pulse and watch the progress of the disease."

Rámkánto. "That is good; Gopiballabh is a very clever physician; though not old, he understands pulsation and other symptoms thoroughly. When does the fever come on? See how he keeps to-day; should the pulse sink after the fever, send for an English doctor to-morrow, either Dr. Charles or Dr. Coates; both are very good doctors."

Mohan. "My uncle gave the same advice."

Rámkánto, taking Mohan aside, *Bábá* (boy), what shall I say? to tell you the truth, I have no very great hopes of his recovery; the case is serious. If through the blessing of God he gets

well, it will be a *second* birth. Your father has been a great friend of mine. You all know very well, he is a staunch Hindoo. In these days of depravity, when the customs of the *mlechas* (Christians) threaten to obliterate all traces of distinction, and to merge everything in one homogeneous element after the English fashion, very few men are to be found like your father, ready to sacrifice their life for the purity of their religion. If his end do not accord with his faith, his future state (*parakál*) is jeopardized. You, young men, may laugh at us, old fools, thinking we have no sense; but a few pages of English do not make a man learned. The English shastra does not make us wise unto salvation; one's own religion is the best for the good of his future state. If you lose your father, you will never get a father again; he has nourished you with care and affection up to this day; as a dutiful son you are bound to serve him in this his last stage. You must be prepared to take him to the river-side when need be, and that is not far distant. If you neglect this, you commit a very great sin, quite unpardonable. What do fathers and mothers wish children for? It is only for the good of their future life, and to take them to Gangá (Ganges) at the proper time. Let your father pass three nights on the river-side. I will return this afternoon; take care, watch him closely, and let Gopiballabh see him constantly."

Giving these instructions, Rámkánto goes away. After three or four hours, the fever returns; the patient becomes delirious and talks nonsense; and the wife, becoming very uneasy, calls the son in a very depressed tone, and tells him to send for the English doctor. The son obeying the order sends for the English doctor at once.

After an hour or so, in comes Dr. Charles, accompanied by Babu Brajabandhu. Entering the sick man's room, Dr. Charles examines the patient carefully, asks Brajabandhu what medicines he has been giving him,—the women all the while peeping through the window, unable to understand

what the doctors are talking about,—and being satisfied on this point, comes out and tells the son that his father is dangerously ill, and that his friend's prescriptions are all right; he, Dr. Charles, could not do better.

Here enters Rámkánto with two other friends. Before going inside he says to Mohan: "I hear Dr. Charles was here; what did he say? How was the fever to-day?"

Mohan answers, "Dr. Charles said, father is very ill; the paroxysm to-day was somewhat more violent than that of other days."

Rámkánto. "That's bad; day by day the fever eats into the vitals of his system."

Here the native physician comes. "Well, *Kabiráj Maháshoy,* please go and see how the patient is doing." Gopiballabh, the native physician, goes inside, examines the sick man with great care, satisfies the eager enquiries of the women by assuring them that there is no fear, and returns outside.

Rámkánto to Gopiballabh. "How did you find him? Is the pulse in its right place? Do you apprehend any immediate danger? Dr. Charles was here; you have heard what he has said. Whatever the youngsters may say, I have greater confidence in you than in the English doctors. Take good care, and tell us the exact time when to remove the patient to the river-side; that is our last sacred office. Should anything happen at home, which God forbid, we shall never be able to show our faces through shame. What with such a big son, and so many friends and relations, it would be a crying shame if the patient were to die at home? Destiny will have its course, but your *hathjas* (skill) will go a great way."

Gopiballabh. "Everything depends on the will of God; what can we mortals do? Whatever fate has ordained must come to pass; we are mere instruments in the hands of God. The patient is gradually sinking, the pulse neither steady nor in its right place; we must be prepared for the worst. A *strong* pulse in a *weak* body is an ominous sign; but there is no fear to-night, I can guarantee that."

Rámkánto. "Well, it appears his end is nigh, he is destined to have no more rice and water."*

Then, pointing to Mohan, Rámkánto says, "To-morrow morning his *Baitarani* rite† must be performed. Make the necessary preparations at once, and send a man to procure a cot (charpoy); also see that nothing may be wanting to hurry him to the river-side."

Mohan. "I must do what you bid me do; hitherto I remained behind a mountain, now I shall be without protection."

Next morning, the rite of *Baitarani* being performed, preparations are made to carry the sick man to the river-side: all the nearest relations and friends assemble; and the patient, still in the full possession of his senses, is brought outside and laid on the *chárpoy;* his forehead is daubed with the mud of the Ganges, and a *tulsi* plant is placed about his head. He is told to repeat the name of his guardian deity; and one man going up to him says, "Let's go to visit the mother Ganga," at which he nods; this serves as a signal for lifting the *charpoy*, and carrying it on the hands of four or more strong persons of equal height. The heart-rending scene that hereupon ensue among the women cannot be adequately described. Their falling on the ground, their loud and affecting cries, the tearing of their dishevelled locks, the beating of their breast, the contortions of their bodies, all produce a mournful scene of anguish and despair which my feeble pen cannot portray. The sick man is thus carried, perhaps a distance of two or three

* This means that his days are numbered, and he must soon die.

† *Baitarani* is a river which must be crossed before one gets to heaven. The rite consists in distributing a certain amount of money in lieu of cow, clothes, rice, fruits, &c., among the Bráhmans, that they may guide the soul through the Death Valley to the other side. This rite, in cases of old people, is generally performed before death, where the patient is passed all hope of recovery. In other cases, performed at the time of *shrádh*, which takes place after a mourning of 30 days.

miles, in a state of consciousness,* exposed to all the dangers of inclement weather, fully aware of his approaching end, the carriers changing hands every now and then, and shouting out every five minutes, "Hari, Haribole, Gangá Narayan Brohmo, Shiva, Ráma," until they reach their destination, which, in Calcutta, is Nimtallá Ghát, on the banks of the Hughli.†

* A Hindoo, especially a grown up man, if he dies at home, is branded as an unrighteous person; many a one, otherwise esteemed righteous in his lifetime, is afterward denounced as a sinful being, should he not expire on the banks of the holy stream. In the *rári*, or inland provinces. through which the Ganges does not flow, people are content to breathe their last on the banks of a neighbouring tank; and are consequently precluded, by their geographical position, from securing the benefit of this *cheap* mode of salvation. As a partial atonement for this natural disadvantage, the navel of the dead is brought and thrown into the holy stream, which is supposed to be tantamount to the purification of the soul.

† A few years back the Calcutta Municipality proposed to have the Burning Ghát removed to Dhápá, a notoriously unhealthy marshy swamp, some six miles east of Calcutta, bordering on the Sunderbuns, because the present site was considered a nuisance to the city. As might naturally be expected, a great sensation was created among the Hindoo population; and memorials were submitted to the Government of Bengal, signed by the most influential portion of the Hindoo community. In spite of solicitation and remonstrance, the Municipality were determined to carry out their plan; but the *mighty* Ramgopal Ghose, as the late Mr. James Hume, the Editor of the "*Eastern Star*," styled him, interposed, and did his best, at great personal sacrifice, to resist the proposal. The Hindoos called a meeting; and Ramgopal, moved by the entreaties of his countrymen, made an admirable speech at the Town Hall, on which occasion no less than fifty thousand people assembled on the *maidan*, facing the Town Hall. He set forth, in a graphic manner, the suitableness of the present site, and the distress and hardship to the people, as well as the shock to religious feeling which the removal would involve. He eventually succeeded in prevailing upon the authorities to withdraw the proposal. When he came out of the Town Hall, he was most enthusiastically cheered by thousands of people, Bráhmans and Sudras; and loud cries of "may he live long" were heard on all sides

When the *chárpoy* on which the sick man has been carried is placed on the ground, some one calls out to him to look at the sacred stream; which he does in a state of mind that can be better imagined than described. On opening his eyes he beholds a dark, gloomy scene, the ghastliness of which is enough to strike horror into the heart of the most callous and indifferent. Here a dying man, suffering from the convulsive agony of acute pain, is, perhaps, gasping for breath; there a fellow-mortal is taken in a hurry to the very edge of the holy stream to breathe out the last breath of life; to deepen the gloom, perhaps a corpse, borne on an open bier, is just brought to the Ghát amidst vociferous cries of "Hari, Haribole," which is a significant death-warrant.

> "'Tis too horrible;
> The weariest and most loathed earthly life
> Which age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature, is a paradise
> To what we fear of death?"

Can imagination conceive a more dismal, ghastly scene? Yet religion has crowned the practice with the weight of national sanction, and thus deadened the finer sensibilities of our nature. Sad as this picture is, the most staunch advocate of liberalism can hardly expect to escape such a fate. To a person accustomed to such scenes, death and its concomitant agony loses half its terrors. How many Hindoos are annually hurried to their eternal home by reason of this superstitious inhuman practice? Instances are not wanting to corroborate the truth of this painful fact. Persons entrusted with the care and nursing of a dying man at the Burning Ghát soon get tired of their charge, and, rather than minister to his comfort, are known to resort to artificial means, whereby death is actually accelerated. They unscrupulously pour the unwholesome, muddy water of the river down his already choked throat, and in some cases suffocate him to death. "These are not the ebullient flashes from the glowing caldron

of a kindled imagination," but undeniable facts founded on the realities of life.

The process of *antarjali*, or immersion, is another name for suffocation. Life is so tenacious, especially in what the Hindoos call *old bones*, or aged persons, that I have seen some persons brought back home after having undergone this murderous process nine or ten times, in as many days. The patient, perhaps an uncared-for widow cast adrift in the world, retaining the faculty of consciousness unimpaired, is willing to die, rather than continue to drag on a loathsome existence; but nature will not readily yield the vital spark. In spite of repeated immersions, the apparently dying flicker of life will not be extinguished. In the case of an aged man, the return home after *immersion* is infamously scandalous; but in that of an aged widow, the disgrace is more poignant than death itself. I have known of an instance in which an old widow was brought back after fifteen *immersions*; but, being overpowered by a sense of shame, she drowned herself in the river, after having lived a disgraceful life for more than a year. As I have observed elsewhere, no expression is more frequent in the mouth of an aged widow than the following: "Shall I ever die?" Scarcely any effort has ever been made to suppress, or even to ameliorate, this barbarous practice, simply because religion has consecrated it with its holy sanction.

But, to resume the thread of my narrative, the sick man dies after a stay of four days at the Ghát, suffering perhaps the most excruciating pangs and agony frequently attendant on a deathbed. During these days the names of his gods are repeatedly whispered in his ears, and the consolations of religion are offered him with an unsparing hand, in order to mitigate his sufferings, and, if possible, to brighten his last hours. The corpse is removed from the resting place to the Burning Ghát, a distance of a few hundred yards, and preparations for a funeral pile are speedily made. The body is then covered with a piece of new cloth and laid upon the

pyre, the upper and lower part of which is composed of firewood, faggots, and a little sandalwood and ghee to neutralize the smell. The *Maruipora* Bráhman,* an outcast, reads the formula, and the son or the nearest-of-kin, changing his old garment for new white cloths, called *uttari*, at one end of which is fastened an iron key to keep off evil spirits, sets fire to the pile. The body is consumed to ashes, but the navel remaining unburnt is taken out and thrown into the river. Thus ends the ceremony of cremation; the son after pouring a few jars of holy water on the pile, bathes in the stream, and returns home with his friends. It is worthy of remark here, that Providence is so propitious to us in every respect, that, in a few hours, the son becomes reconciled to his unhappily altered circumstances caused by the loss of his father; instead of bemoaning his loss in a despondent frame of mind, he is soon awakened to a sense of his new responsibility. On reaching the gate of the house, they all touch fire; and, putting some *neem* leaves and a few grains of *kalie* (a kind of pulse) into their mouth, cry out as before "Haribole, Haribole," and enter the house. The lamentation of the females inside the house, which was suppressed for a while through sheer exhaustion, is instantly renewed at the sound of "Haribole," as if fresh fuel were added to the flame, and every voice is drowned in the overwhelming surge of grief. Their melancholy strain, their pointed, pathetic allusion to the bereavement, the cadence of their plaintive voices, the utter dejection

* Some forty years back these Bráhmans and their whole crew of *murdafarashes* were a regular set of ruffians, whose sole occupation was to fleece their victims in the most extortionate manner imaginable; the Bráhman would not read the formula, nor his myrmidons put up the funeral pile, until they had received nearly four times the amount of the present cost. Great credit is due to Babu Chandra Mohan Chaterji, the late Registrar of deeds and joint stock companies in Calcutta, for his strenuous exertions in getting the Police to frame a set of rules for regulating the funeral expenses at the Burning Ghát. It is a public boon which cannot be too highly appreciated.

of their spirit, their loud, doleful cries reverberating from one side of the house to the other, the beating of their breasts, and the tearing of their hair, are too affecting not to make the most obdurate shed tears.

From the hour of his father's death to the conclusion of the funeral ceremony, the son is religiously forbidden to shave, wear shoes, shirts, or any garment other than the long piece of white cloth; and his food is confined to a single meal consisting only of *átab* rice, *khasari dáll* (a sort of inferior pulse), milk, ghee, sugar, and a few fruits, which must be cooked either by his mother or his wife, but it is preferable if he can cook for himself; at night he takes a little milk, sugar, and fruits. This *regimen* lasts ten days in the case of a Bráhman, and thirty-one days in that of a *Sudra.** Here the advantages of the privileged class are twofold: (1) the Bráhman has to observe the rigid discipline for ten days only; (2) he has ample excuse for small expenditure at the funeral ceremony on the score of the shortness of the time. This austere mode of living for a month in the case of a *Káyastha*, by far the most aristocratic and influential portion of the Hindoo population, serves as a tribute of respect and gratitude to the memory of a departed father. As the country is now in a transition state, a young educated Hindoo does not strictly abide by the above rule, but breaks it privately in his mode of living, of which the inmates of the family alone are cognizant. He repudiates publicly what he does privately. Thus the outer man and the inner man are not exactly one and the same being; he dares

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* In the case of a married daughter, when her father or mother dies, the mourning lasts for only three days. On the morning of the fourth day she is enjoined to cut her nails, and perform the funeral ceremony for her departed father or mother. An entertainment is given to the Bráhmans and friends. This is always done on a comparatively small scale; and in most cases the husband is made to bear all the expenses of the ceremony and the entertainment.

not avow without what he does within; in short, he plays the hypocrite. But an orthodox Hindoo observes the rule in all its integrity. He is more consistent if not more rational; he does not play a double game, but conforms to the rules of his creed with scrupulous exactness.

Fifteen or sixteen days after the demise of his father, the son, if young, is assisted by his friends in drawing out an estimate of the probable cost of the approaching *Shráddha*, or funeral ceremony. In the generality of cases, the estimate is made out according to the length of the purse of the party. A few exceed it, under a wrong impression that a debt is warranted by the special gravity of the occasion, which is one of great merit in popular estimation.* The Sobhá-Bázár Ráj family, the Dey family of Simla, the Mallik and Tagore families of Pathuriaghátá, all of Calcutta, were said to have spent upwards of £20,000, or two lakhs of rupees each, on a funeral ceremony. They not only gave rich presents in money and kind to almost all the learned Bráhmans of Bengal, and fed vast crowds of men of all classes, but likewise distributed immense sums among beggars and poor people,† who, for the

* Apart from erroneous popular notions, which in this age of depravity are corrupted by vanity, the Hindoo Shastra, be it mentioned to its credit, abounds in explicit injunctions on the subject of a funeral ceremony, prescribing various ways according to the peculiar circumstances of the parties. From an expenditure of lakhs and lakhs of rupees down to a mere trifle, it can be performed with the ultimate prospect of equal merit. It is stated in the holy Shastra that the god Rámchandra considered himself purified (for a Hindoo under mourning is held unclean until the funeral ceremony is performed) by offering to the manes of his ancestors simple balls of sand, called *pindas*, on the bank of the holy stream. In these days a poor man is held sanctified, or absolved from this religious responsibility, by making a *tilokánchan Shráddha*, or offering a small quantity of rice, *tilseed*, and a few fruits, and feeding only one Bráhman, all which would not cost more than four rupees.

† At the Shráddhas of Rájá Nabakrishna, Nimai Charan Mallik, and Rámdulál Dey, very near 100,000 beggars were said to have assembled

sake of one rupee, walked a distance of perhaps thirty miles, bringing with them their little children in order to increase their numerical strength. Although now-a-days the authorities do not sanction such a tumultuous gathering, or tolerate such a nuisance, oftentimes attended with fatal accidents, no *Shráddha* of any note takes place without the assemblage of a large number of beggars and paupers, who receive from two to four annas each.

After the twentieth day, the son, accompanied by a Bráhman and a servant who carries a small carpet for the Babu to sit on, walks barefooted to the house of every one of his relations, friends, and neighbours, to announce personally that the *Shráddha* is to take place on such a day,—*i. e.*, on the thirty-first day after the death, and to request that they will honour him with their presence and see that the ceremony is properly performed, adding such other complimentary words as the occasion suggests. This ceremonious visit is called *lowkatá*, and those who are visited return the compliment in due time. The practice is deserving of commendation, inasmuch as it manifests a grateful respect for the memory of one to whom he is indebted for his being. Precisely on the thirtieth day, the son and other near relatives shave, cut their nails, and put on new clothes again, giving the old clothes to the barber. Meantime invitations are sent round to the Bráhmans as well as to the Sudras, requesting the favor of their presence at the *Sabhá*, or assembly, on the morning of the *Shráddha*, and at the feast on the following day or days. On the thirty-first day, early in the morning, the son, accompanied by

together. This mode of charity is much discountenanced now, and better systems are adopted for the ostensible gratification of generous propensities. The District Charitable Society should have a preference in every case. Instead of making a great noise by sound of trumpet, and raising an ephemeral name from vain glorious motives, it is far wiser that a permanent provision should be made for the relief of suffering humanity.

the officiating priest, goes to the river-side, bathes and performs certain preliminary rites. Here the *rayowbháts* and *tastiráms* (religious mendicants), who watch these things just as closely as a vulture watches a carcase, give him a gentle hint about their rights, and follow him to the house, waiting outside for their share of the articles offered to the manes of the deceased. In former days, when the Police were not half so vigilant as they now are, these men were so troublesome and boisterous that for two days successively they would continue to shout and roar, and proclaim to the passers by that the deceased would never be able to enter *Boykanta*, or paradise, and that his soul would burn in hell-fire until their demands were satisfied. Partly from shame, but more from a desire to avoid such a boisterous, unseemly scene, the son is forced to succumb and satisfy them in the best way he can.

As the style of living among the Hindoos has of late become rather expensive, and the potent influence of vanity—purely the result of an artificial state of society—exerts its pressure even on this mournful occasion, the son, if he be well-to-do in the world, spends from five to six thousand rupees on a *Shráddha*, the richer more. He has to provide for the apparently solemn purpose the following silver utensils, *viz.:—ghará, gáru, thálá, bátá, báti, ráykáb, gaylash* (glass), besides couch, bedding, shawls, broadcloth, a large lot of brass utensils and hard cash in silver, all which go to pay Bráhmans and Pandits, who have been invited. The waning ascendency of this privileged class is strikingly manifest on an occasion of this nature. For one or two rupees they will clamour and scramble, and unblushingly indulge in all manner of fulsome adulation of the party that invited them.*

The Pandits of the country, however learned they may be in classical lore, and endowed with logical acumen, are very much

* The appearance of Bráhmans on such occasions presents a ludicrous mixture of the learned and the ragged, exhibiting the insolence of high caste and the low cringe of poverty.

wanting in the rules of polished life. The manner in which they display their profound learning is alike puerile and ludicrous. History does not furnish us with sufficient data regarding their conduct in ancient days. As far as research or investigation has elucidated the point, it is reasonable to conclude that the ascendency of the Bráhmans was built on the ignorance of the people; and there is a very strong probability that there was a secret coalition between the priests and the rulers for the purpose of keeping the great mass of the nation in a state of perpetual darkness and subjection, the people being oftentimes content with the barter of "solid pudding against empty praise." But the progress of enlightenment is so irresistible that the strongest bulwark of secret compact for the conservation of unnatural Bráhmanical authority must, as it should, crumble into dust. It would be a great injustice to deny that, among these Bráhmans, there were some justly distinguished for their profound erudition and saintly lives; they displayed a piety, a zeal, a constant and passionate devotion to their faith, which contrast strangely enough with the profligacy and worldliness of the present ecclesiastics.

The Pandits of the present day, when they assemble at a *Shráddha*—and that is considered a fit arena for discussion—generally engage in some controversy, the bone of contention being a debatable point in grammar, logic, metaphysics, or theology. They love to indulge in sentimental transcendentalism, as if utterly unconscious of the matter-of-fact tendency of the age we live in. A strong desire to display their deep learning and high classical acquirements in Sanskrit, not sometimes unmixed with a contemptible degree of affectation, insensibly leads them to violate the fundamental laws of decorum. When two or more Pandits wrangle, the warmth of debate gradually draws them nearer and closer to each other, until from sober, solid argumentation, they descend to the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* if not to the *argumentum ad baculum*. Their taking a pinch of snuff, the quick movement of their hands, the almost

involuntary loosening of their garment, which consists of a single *dhuti* and *dobjá* often put round the neck, the vehement tone in which they conduct a discussion, the utter want of attention to each other's arguments, and their constant divergence from the main point whence they started, throw a serio-comic air over the scene which a Dave Carson alone could imitate. They do not know what candour is; they are immovable in their own opinion; and scarcely anything could conquer their dogged obstinacy in their own argument, however fallacious it may be. They are as prodigal in the quotation of specious texts in support of their own particular thesis, as they are obstinately deaf to the sound logical view of an opponent. Bráhmanical learning is certainly uttered in "great swarths" which, like polished pebbles, are sometimes mistaken for diamonds. The way in which the disputants give flavour to their arguments is quite a study in the art of dropping meanings. The destruction of the old husks, and the transparent sophistries of the disputatious Brahmans, is one of the great triumphs chieved by the rapid diffusion of Western knowledge.

When engaged in an animated discussion, these Pandits will not desist until they are separated by their other learned friends of the faculty. Some of them are very learned in the Shastra, especially in *Smriti*, on which a dispute often hangs; but they have very little pretension to the calm and dispassionate discussion of a subject. Cogency of argument is almost invariably lost in the vehemence of declamation and in the utterance of unmeaning patter. Their arguments are not like Lord Beaconsfield's speeches,—a little labored and labyrinthine at first, but soon working themselves clear and becoming amusing and sagacious. Let it not be understood from this that the literature of the language (Sanskrit) in which they speak is destitute of sound logic, as Mr. James Mill would have his readers believe. It is certainly deficient in science and the correct principles of natural philosophy,

as developed by modern discoveries; but the elegance of its diction, the beautiful poetical imagery in which it abounds, the sound moral doctrines which it inculcates, the force of argument by which it is distinguished, and the elevated ideas which its original system of theology unfolds, afford no good reason why it should not be stamped with the dignity and importance of a classical language, and why "the deep students of it should not enjoy some of the honors and estimation conferred by the world on those who have established a name for an erudite acquaintance with Latin and Greek." If the respective merits of all the classical languages are properly estimated, it is not too much to say that the Sanskrit language will in no way suffer by the comparison; though, as history abundantly testifies, it labored under all the adverse circumstances of mighty political changes and convulsions, no less than the intolerant bigotry of many of the Moslem conquerors, whose unsparing devastations have destroyed some of the best specimens of Sanskrit composition. "When our princes were in exile," says a celebrated Hindoo writer, "driven from hold to hold, and compelled to dwell in the clefts of the mountains, often doubtful whether they would not be forced to abandon the very meal preparing for them, was that a time to think of historical records," and we should say, of literary excellence? The deep and laborious researches of Sir William Jones, Colebrooke, Macnaghten, Wilson, Wilkins, and a host of other distinguished German and French savants, have, in a great measure, brought to light the hidden treasures of the Sanskrit language.

From eight o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon the house where a *shráddha* is going on is crammed to suffocation. A large awning covers the open space of the courtyard, preventing the free access of air; carpets and satterangees are spread on the ground for the *Káyasthas* and other castes to sit on, while the Bráhmans and Pandits, by way of precedence, take their seats on the raised *Thákurdálan*, or

place of worship. The couch-cot with bedding, and the *dán* consisting of silver and brass utensils enumerated before, with a silver salver filled with rupees, are arranged in a straight line opposite the audience, leaving a little open space for *kittanees*, or bands of male or female singers and musicians, which form the necessary accompaniment of a *shráddha*, for the purpose of imparting solemnity to the scene. Three or four door-keepers guard the entrance, so that no intruders may enter and create a disturbance. The guests begin to come in at eight, and are courteously asked to take their appropriate seats, Bráhmans with Bráhmans, and Káyasthas with Káyasthas; the servants in waiting serve them with *hukka* and tobacco,* those given to the Bráhmans having a thread or string fastened at the top for the sake of distinction. The Kayasthas and other guests are seen constantly going in and coming out, but most of the Bráhmans stick to their places until the funeral ceremony is completed. The current topics of the day form the subject of conversation, while the *hukka* goes round the assembly with great precision and punctuality. The female relatives are brought in covered *palkis*, as has been described before, by a separate entrance, shut out from the gaze of the males. But as this is a mourning scene, their naturally cheerful spirit gives way to condolence and sympathy. Excessive

* The Hindoos are so much accustomed to smoking that it has almost become a necessary of life. At a reception it is the first thing required. The practice is regulated by rules of etiquette, so that a younger brother is not permitted to smoke in the presence of his elder brother or his uncle. Even among the reformed Hindoos, I have seen two brothers eat and drink together at the same table in European style, but when the dinner was over, the younger brother would, on no account, smoke in the presence of his elder brother; if he did, he would be instantly voted *bayádab*, or one wanting in the rules of good breeding. The observance of this etiquette, however, is confined only to the high-caste people; among the lower orders, a son smokes before his father with the same freedom as if he were taking his ordinary meal.

grief does not allow the mother and the wife of the deceased to take an active part in the melancholy proceedings of the day; they generally stay aloof in a separate room, and are perhaps heard to mourn or cry. The very sight of the mourning offerings, instead of affording any consolation, only rekindles the flame of sorrow, and produces a train of thoughts in keeping with the commemoration of the sad event. Sisters of a congenial spirit try to soothe them by precepts and examples; but their admonition and condolence prove in the main unavailing. The appearance of a new face revives the sad emotions of the heart. Nothing can dispel from the mind of a disconsolate mother or wife the gloomy thought of her bereavement, and the still more gloomy idea of a perpetual widowhood. The clang of *khole* and *karatal* (musical instruments), which is fitted from its very dissonance to drive away the ghost and kill the living, falls doubly grating on her ears; while the fond endearments of *Jasoda*, the mother of Krishna, rehearsed by the singers in the outer courtyard, but aggravate her grief the more. Weak and tender-hearted by nature, she gradually sinks under the overwhelming load of despondency, and raising her hand to her forehead mournfully exclaims, "has Fate reserved all this for me?" In such cases, there is appropriateness in silence.

About ten o'clock the son begins to perform the rite of the funeral obsequies, first asking the permission of the Bráhmans and the assembled guests to do so. The officiating priest reads the formulas, he repeating them. It must be noticed here that, tenacious as the Hindoos are in respect of the distinction of caste, they do not scruple to invite the lower orders on such an occasion; but they will not mix with them at the time of eating. The *Dalapati*, or head of the party, makes his appearance about this time. When he enters the house, all other guests then present, except the Bráhmans, rise to their feet as a token of respect for his position, and do not resume their seats until he sits down. For this

distinction or honor a *Dalapati* has to spend an immense sum of money, to which reference has already been made. His appearance serves as a signal for the performance of the rite called *málá chandan*, or the distribution of garlands and sandal paste, among the assembled multitude. As a matter of course, the Bráhmans, by way of pre-eminence, receive the first garland, and after them the *Dalapati* obtains the same honor, and then the *Kulins** and other guests, according to rank. Where there is no *Dalapati*, the first garland is put

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* The following anecdote illustrating the very great honor shewn to first-class Kulins, will, I trust, not be considered out of place :—

When the late Rájá Rájkrishna Báhádur, of Calcutta, had to perform the *Shrád*, or funeral ceremony, of his illustrious father, the late Mahárajá Nabakrishna (the ceremony was said to have cost about five lakhs of rupees, or £50,000,), he had to invite almost all the celebrated Kulins of Bengal at considerable expense. On the day of the *Shrád*, those who were invited assembled at his mansion in Sobhá-Bázár; when all eyes were dazzled at the unparalleled magnificence of the scene, displaying a gorgeous array of gold, silver, and brass utensils for presents to Bráhmans, exclusive of large sums of money, Cashmere shawls, broadcloth, &c. After the performance of the ceremony, as is usual on such occasions, the distribution of garlands and sandal-paste had to be gone through. The whole of the splendid assemblage had been watching with intense anxiety as to who should get the *first* garland—the highest respect shewn, according to precedence of rank, to the *first* Kulin present. This is a very knotty point in a large assemblage to which all orders of Kulins have been brought together. The honor was eagerly contested and coveted by many, but at length a voice from a corner loudly proclaimed to the following effect: "Put the garland on my elephantiasis," laying bare and stretching out his right leg at the same time, and thus suiting the action to the word. The attention of the assembled multitude was immediately turned in that direction; and to the amazement of all, the garland had to be put round the neck of the very man who shouted from the corner, because by a general consensus he was pronounced to be the *first* Kulin then present. But such artificial and demoralizing distinctions, having no foundation in solid, sterling merit, are fast falling, as they should, into disrepute.

round the neck of a boy, at which no one can take any offence, and afterwards they are distributed indiscriminately.

Meantime the son is engaged in the performance of the ceremony, while the bands of singers quarrel with one another for the privilege of entertaining the audience with their songs, which renders confusion worse confounded. Female singers of questionable virtue are now more in favor than their male rivals, which is an unerring proof of the degeneracy of the age. Only one band is formally engaged, but thirty bands may come of their own accord, quite uninvited. The disappointed ones generally get from two to four rupees each; but the party retained get much more, as the rich guests who come in make them presents, besides what they obtain from the family retaining them.

About one in the afternoon, the ceremony is brought to a close, and the assembled multitudes begin to disperse. Those who have to attend their offices leave earlier, but not without offering the compliments suited to the gravity of the occasion. Some of the Bráhmans remain behind to receive their customary *bidai*, or gift. According to their reputation for learning they obtain their rewards. The first in the list gets, in ordinary cases, about five rupees in cash, and one brass pot, valued at four or five rupees; the second and third, in proportion; and the rest, say, from one to two rupees each, in addition to a brass utensil. The silver utensils, of which the *soroshes* are made, are afterwards cut and allotted to the Bráhmans according to their status in the republic of letters. The *Guru*, or spiritual guide, and the *Purohit*, or officiating priest, being the most interested parties, generally carry off the lion's share. So great is their cupidity that the one disputes the right of the other as to the amount of reward they are respectively entitled to. As a matter of course, the *Guru*, from his spiritual ascendency, manages to carry off the highest prize. The distribution of rewards among the Bráhmans and Pandits, of different degrees of

scholarly attainments, is a rather thankless task. In common with other human beings, they are seldom satisfied, especially when the question is one of rupees, annas, and pie. Each sets a higher value on his own descent and learning, undervaluing the worth of his compeers. The voice of the President, who has many a knotty question to solve, decides their fate; but it is seldom that a classification of this nature results in general satisfaction. As these Pandits, or rather professors, called *Adhaypaks*, do not eat in the house of *Sudras*, they, each of them, receive, in addition to their reward in money and kind, a small quantity of sweetmeats and sugar, say about two pounds in all, in lieu of *achmany jalpán*, or fried and prepared food. On a *Shrád* day, in the afternoon, one can see numbers of such Bráhmans walking through the native part of the city, with an earthen plate of sweetmeats in one hand and a brass pot in the other, the fruits of their day's labor. Such gains being quite precarious, the annual sum total they derive from this source is often quite inadequate to their support and that of the *chatuspáti*, or school, they keep. Hence many such institutions for the cultivation of Sanskrit have been abandoned for want of sufficient encouragement, and, as a necessary consequence, the sons and grandsons of these Bráhmans have taken to secular occupations, quite incompatible with the spirit of the Shástra. In the halcyon days of Hindoo sovereignty, when Bráhmanical learning was in the ascendant, and rich religious endowments were freely made for the support of the hierarchy,* as well from the influence of vanity as from the compunctions of a death-bed repentance, such *chatuspátis* annually sent forth many a brilliant scholar,—the pride of his teacher and the ornament of his country. But the fact that English education is now the only passport to honor and emoluments has necessarily proved a hindrance to the extensive

* Manu commands,—"Should the king be near his end. through some incurable disease, he must bestow on the priests all his riches accumulated from legal fines."

culture of Bráhmanical erudition. The University curriculum, however, under the present Government, embraces a system well calculated to remove the reproach.

The day following the funeral ceremony is spent in giving an entertainment to the Bráhmans, without which Hindoo cannot regain his former purity. About twelve, they begin to assemble, and when the number reaches two or three hundred, *Kusásans*, or grass seats, in long straight rows, are arranged for them in the spacious courtyard ; and, as Hindoos use nothing but green plantain leaves for plates on such grand occasions, each guest is provided with a square piece of a leaf on which are placed the fruits of the season, ghee-fried *luchís* and *kachuries*, and several sorts of sweetmeats in earthen plates, for which there are no English names. In spite of the utmost vigilance of door-keepers and others, intruders in decent dress frequently enter the premises and sit down to eat with the respectable Bráhmans ; but should such a character be found out, steps are instantly taken to oust him. On a grand occasion, some such unpleasant cases are sure to occur. There are loafers among Hindoos as there are among Europeans. These men, whom misfortune or crime has reduced to the last state of poverty, are prepared to put up with any amount of insult so long as they have their fill. When a Hindoo makes a calculation as to the expense of an entertainment at a *Shrád* or marriage—both grand occasions, he is constrained to double or treble his quantum of supply, that he may be enabled to meet such a contingency without any inconvenience. The practice referred to is a most disreputable one, and only befits a people not far above the level of a nomad tribe. Even some of the Bráhmans* who are

* To preserve order and avoid such unseemly practices, a wealthy Baboo—the late Durgárám Kar—when he invited a number of Bráhmans, allotted to each person two separate rations, one on a plantain leaf for eating on the spot, and another in an earthen *handy* or pot, for carrying home for the absent members of his family.

invited do not scruple to take a portion home, regardless of the contaminated touch of a person of the lowest caste, simply because the temptation is too strong to be resisted. Before departure, each of the Bráhmans receives one or two annas as *dakshiná*—a concession which is not accorded to any other caste.

The next day, a similar entertainment is given to the Káyasthas and other classes, which is accompanied by the same noise, confusion, and tumult that characterized the entertainment given on the previous day. The sober and quiet enjoyments of life, which have a tendency to enliven the mind, can seldom be expected in a Hindoo house at the time of a *Shrád*, where all is *golemal*, confusion and disorder. When dinner is announced, a regular scramble takes place; the rude and the uninvited occupy the *first* seats, to the exclusion of the genteel and respectable; and when the eatables are beginning to be served, the indecent cries of "bring *luchi*, bring *kachurie*, bring *tarkari*," and so on, are heard from these guests, every now and again, much to the disturbance of the polite and the discreet.

The day following is called the *niambhanga*, or the day on which the son is allowed to break the rules of mourning after one month. In the morning the band of singers previously retained come and treat the family to songs of Krishna, taking care to select pieces which are most pathetic and heart-rending, befitting the mournful occasion of a very heavy domestic bereavement. The singing continues till twelve or one o'clock, and some people seem to be so deeply affected that they actually shed tears, and forget for a while their worldly cares and anxieties. When the songs are finished, the son and his nearest relatives, rubbing their bodies with oil and turmeric,

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Even this excellent arrangement failed to satisfy the greedy cravings of the voracious Bráhmans. As a *dernier resort*, he at last substituted *cash* for *eatables*, which was certainly a strange way of satisfying the *inner* man.

remove the *brisakát* on their shoulders from the house to some place near. A hole is made in the ground, and the *brisakát* (a painted log of wood about six feet high), with an ox carved on the top, &c., is set up in it; after this they all bathe and return home. The singers are dismissed with presents of money, clothes, and food.

The son then sits down to a dinner with his nearest blood relation, and this is the *first* day that he leaves his *habbishee* diet after a month's mourning, and takes to the use of fish and other Hindoo dishes. He is also allowed to change his mourning dress and put on shoes, after having made a present of a pair to a Bráhman; is unfettered from the restrictions imposed on him from the enjoyment of his conjugal felicity; and, in short, he is permitted to revert to his former mode of living in every respect.

As the entertainment this time consists of *vojan*, made up of rice and curries, and not *jalpán*, made up of *luchis* and sweetmeats, a comparatively small number of guests assemble on the occasion,* and the loafers and intruders exhibit a very diminished proportion. Even on such occasions, one

* There is a vast difference between a *vojan* and a *jalpán* dinner. If there be a thousand guests at the latter, at the most there would be only three hundred at the former, as none but the nearest relatives and friends will condescend to take rice (*vath*), which is almost akin to one and the same clanship; whereas, in a *jalpán*, not only the members of the same caste, but even those of the inferior orders, are tacitly permitted to partake of the same entertainment, without tarnishing the honor of the aristocratic classes.

The following anecdote will, I hope, prove interesting:—

At the marriage procession of a washerman, confessedly very low in the category of caste, two *Káyasthas* (writer caste) joined it on the road in the hope of getting a hearty *jalpán* dinner; but lo! when, after the nuptial rites were over, rice and curries were brought out for the guests, the two *Káyasthas*, who sat down with the rest of the company, tried to escape unnoticed; because if they ate rice at a washerman's, they were sure to lose their caste, but the host would not let them go away without dinner. They at last told the truth, asked forgiveness, and were then allowed to leave the house. To such disappointments unfortunate intruders are sometimes subjected.

can always tell from a distance that there is a feast going on at such a house, from the noise it is invariably attended with.

Having described above the details connected with the funeral ceremony, I will now endeavour to give an account of one or two of the most celebrated *Shráds* that have taken place in Bengal since the battle of Plassey, premising that everything which shall be said on the subject is derived chiefly from hearsay, as no authentic historical records have come down to us. The first and most celebrated *Shrád* was that performed by Dewan Gangá Gobind Singh* on the occasion of his mother's death. It was performed on so large a scale that he caused reservoirs to be made which were filled with ghee and oil; immense heaps of rice, flour and *dall* were piled on the ground. Several large rooms were quite filled with sweetmeats of all sorts. Mountains of earthen pots and firewood were stacked on the maidán. Hundreds of Bráhman cooks and confectioners were constantly at work to provide victuals for the enormous concourse of people. Silver and brass utensils of all kinds were arranged in pyramids. Hundreds of couches with bedding were placed before the *Sabhá* (assembly). Elephants richly caparisoned with silver trappings formed presents to Bráhmans. Tens of thousands of silver coins bearing the stamp of *Shah Allum* were placed on massive silver plates. And to crown the whole, thousands of learned Pandits from all parts of the country congregated together to impart a religious solemnity to the spectacle. All these preparations lent a grandeur to the scene, which was in the highest degree imposing. Countless myriads of beggars from the most distant parts of the Province assembled together, and they were not only fed

* The ancestor and founder of the present Paikpárá Ráj Family. The well-known *Nálá Bábu*, about whose self-denial elsewhere is mentioned, is 3rd or 4th in descent from the above-named Dewan, and the great grandfather of the present (1883) living members of the family. The charitable spirit is inherent in the family.

for weeks at the expense of the Dewan, but were dismissed with presents of money, clothes, and food, with the most enthusiastic *hosannas* on their lips. For more than two months the distribution of alms and presents lasted; and what was the most praiseworthy feature in the affair was the Job-like patience of the Dewan, whose charity flowed like the rushing tide of the holy Ganges, on the banks of which he presented offerings to the manes of his ancestors. Some of the *Adhyapaks*, or Professors, obtained as much as one thousand rupees each in cash; and gold and silver articles, or rather fragments of the same, to a considerable value. Besides these magnificent honorariums, the whole of their travelling and lodging expenses were defrayed by the Dewan, who was reputed to be so rich that, like Croesus of old, he did not know how much he was worth. The expenses of the *Shrád* have been variously estimated at between ten and twelve lakhs of rupees. The result of this truly extravagant expenditure was widespread fame, and the name of the donor is still cherished with grateful remembrance.

The next *Shrád* of importance was that of Mahárájá Nabakrishna Báhádur, of Sobhá-bázár, Calcutta. His son, Rájá Rájkrishna, performed the *Shrád*, which, to this day, stands unrivalled in this city. Four sets of gold, and sixty-four sets of silver, utensils described before, amounting in value to near a lakh of rupees, were given on the occasion. Such paraphernalia go by the name of *dánságar*, or "gift like the sea." Besides these presents in money to Bráhmans, upwards of two lakhs of rupees were given to the poor.

If these immense sums of money had been invested for the permanent support of a charitable institution, it would have done incalculable good to society. But then there was no regularly organized system of public charity, nor had the people any idea of it. Such immense sums were spent mostly for religious purposes, according to the prevailing notions of the age. Tanks, reservoirs, flights of steps on the banks of

the rivers,* fine rows of trees, stone buildings, or *choultries* for travellers, at every three miles affording a grateful shelter throughout the country, were among the works of public utility constructed by the charitably disposed.

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* In the sacred city of Benares vast sums of money had been sunk in building Ghâts, with magnificent flights of steps, stretching from the bank to the very edge of the water at ebb-tide, affording great convenience to the people both for religious and domestic purposes, but the strong current of the stream in the months of August, September, and October has played sad havoc with the masonry. Scarcely a single Ghât exists in a complete state of preservation.

XXI.

SATI, OR THE IMMOLATION OF HINDOO WIDOWS.

FIFTY years ago, when the British Government was endeavouring to consolidate its power in the East, and when the religious prejudices of the Natives were alike tolerated and respected, there arose a great man in Bengal, who was destined by Providence to work a mighty revolution in their social, moral, and intellectual condition. That great man was Râmmohan Roy, the pioneer of Hindoo enlightenment. Having early enriched his mind with European and Eastern erudition, he soon rose, by his energy, to a degree of eminence and usefulness which afterwards marked his career as a distinguished reformer and a benevolent philanthropist. He was emphatically an oasis in this sterile land—a solitary example of a highly cultivated mind among many millions of men grovelling in ignorance. To his indefatigable exertions we are indebted for the abolition of the inhuman practice of Sati, the very name of which evokes a natural shrinking, and which appallingly and suddenly expunged a tender life from the earth, and severed the dearest ties of humanity. This rite was the severest reflection on the satanic character of a religion that ignores the first principle of divine law. Women are of an impressionable nature; their enthusiasm is easily fanned into a flame, and superstition and priestcraft took advantage of it.

Not content with sending a sick man to the river-side to be suffocated and burnt to ashes, a narrow-minded hierarchy

lent its sanction to the destruction of a living creature, by burning the Hindoo widow with the dead body of her husband, the fire being kindled perhaps by the hand of one whom she had nurtured and suckled in infancy. It is awful to contemplate how the finest sensibilities of our nature are sometimes blunted by a false faith.

My apology for dwelling on this painful subject, now that the primary cause of complaint has long since been removed by a wise Legislature, is no other than that I was once an eye-witness of a melancholy scene of this nature, the dreadful atrocity of which it is impossible even at this distance of time to call to mind without horror and dismay. As the tale I am going to relate is founded in real life, its truthfulness may be thoroughly relied upon.

When I was a little boy reading in a *Patsálá* at home, my attention was one morning roused by hearing from my mother that my aunt was "going as a Sati." The word was then scarcely intelligible to me. I pondered and thought over and over again in my mind what could the word 'Sati' mean. Being unable to solve the problem, I asked my mother for an explanation; she, with tears in her eyes, told me that my aunt (living in the next house) was "going to eat fire." Instantly I felt a strong curiosity to see the thing with my own eyes, still laboring under a misconception as to what the reality could be. I had then no distinct notion that life would be at once annihilated. I never thought for a moment that I was going to lose my dear aunt for ever. My mind was quite unsettled, and I felt an irresistible desire to look into the thing more minutely. I ran down to my aunt's room, and what should I see there, but a group of sombre complexioned women with my aunt in the middle. I have yet, after fifty years, a vivid recollection of what I then saw in the room. My aunt was dressed in a red silk *sári* with all the ornaments on her person; her forehead daubed with a very thick coat of *sindur*, or vermillion; her feet painted red with *áltá;* she was

chewing a mouthful of betel; and a bright lamp was burning before her. She was evidently wrapt in an ecstacy of devotion, earnest in all she did, quite calm and composed as if nothing important was to happen. In short, she was then at her *matins*, anxiously awaiting the hour when this mortal coil should be put off. My uncle was lying a corpse in the adjoining room. It appeared to me that all the women assembled were admiring the virtue and fortitude of my aunt. Some were licking the betel out of her mouth, some touching her forehead in order to have a little of the *sindur*, or vermillion; while not a few, falling before her feet, expressed a fond hope that they might possess a small particle of her virtue. Amidst all these surroundings, what surprised me most was my aunt's stretching out one of her hands, at the bidding of an old Bráhman woman, and holding a finger right over the wick of the burning lamp for a few seconds until it was scorched, and forcibly withdrawn by the old lady who bade her do so in order to test the firmness of her mind. The perfect composure with which she underwent this fiery ordeal fully convinced all that she was a real Sati, fit to abide with her husband in *Boykunta*, paradise. Nobody could notice any change in her countenance or resolution after she had gone through this painful trial.

It was about eleven o'clock when preparations were made for the removal of the corpse of my uncle to the Ghát. It was a small mourning procession, nearly thirty persons, all of respectable families, volunteered to carry the dead body alternately on their shoulders. The body was laid on a *chárpoy;* my aunt followed it, not in a closed but in an open Palki. She was unveiled, and regardless of the consequences of a public exposure, she was, in a manner, dead to the external world. The delicate sense of shame so characteristic of Hindoo females was entirely suppressed in her bosom. In truth, she was evidently longing for the hour when her spirit and that of her husband should meet together and dwell in heaven. She had a *tulsi málá* (string of basil beads) in her right

hand, which she was telling; and she seemed to enjoy the shouts of "Hari, Hari-bole" with perfect serenity of mind. How can we account for the strange phenomenon that a sentient being, in a state of full consciousness, was ready to surrender at the feet of "Hari" the last spark of life for ever, without a murmur, a sigh, or a tear? A deep, sincere religious faith, which serves as a sheetanchor to the soul amidst the storms of life, can alone unriddle the enigma, and disarm death of its terrors. We reached Nimtallá Ghát about twelve; and after staying there for about ten to fifteen minutes, sprinkling the holy water on the dead body, all proceeded slowly to Kultallá Ghát, about three miles north of Nimtallá. On arriving at the destination, which was the dreary abode of Hindoo undertakers, solitary and lonesome, the Police Darogah, who was also a Hindoo, came to the spot and closely examined my aunt in various ways attempting, if possible, to induce her to change her mind; but she, like Joan of Arc, was resolute and determined; she gave an unequivocal reply to the effect that "such was her predestination, and that Hari had summoned her and her husband into the Boykanta." The Darogah, amazed at the firmness of her mind, staid at the Ghát to watch the proceedings, while preparations were being made for a funeral pile, which consisted of dry firewood, faggots, pitch, with a lot of sandalwood, ghee, &c., in it to impart a fragrant odour to the air. Half a dozen bamboos or sticks were also procured, the use of which we afterwards saw and understood. We little boys were ordered to stand aloof. The *Maruyepora Bráhman* (priest who officiates on such occasions) came and read a few *mantras*, or incantations. The dead body wrapped in new clothes being placed on the pyre, my aunt was desired to walk seven times round it, which she did while strewing flowers, cowries (shells), and parched rice on the ground. It struck me at the time that, at every successive circumambulation, her strength and presence of mind failed; whereupon the

Darogah stepped forward once more and endeavoured even at the last moment to deter her from her fatal determination. But she, at the very threshold of ghastly death, in the last hour of expiring life, the fatal torch of *Yama* (Pluto) before her, calmly ascended the funeral pile, and lying down by the side of her husband, with one hand under his head and another on his breast, was heard to call, in a half suppressed voice, "Hari, Hari,"—a sign of her firm belief in the reality of eternal beatitude. When she had thus laid herself on the funeral pyre, she was instantly covered, or rather choked with dry wood, while some stout men with the bamboos held and pressed down the pyre, which was by this time burning fiercely on all sides. A great shout of exultation then arose from the surrounding spectators, till both the dead and living bodies were converted into a handful of dust and ashes. When the tragic scene was brought to a close, and the excitement of the moment subsided, men and women wept and sobbed, while cries and groans of sympathy filled the air.

If all religions be not regarded as "splendid failures," that outlook into the future, which sustains us amid the manifold griefs and agonies of a troublous life, holds out the sure hope of a blessed existence hereafter. My aunt, Bhagabati Dási, though a victim of superstition, had nevertheless a firm, unalterable faith in the merciful dispensations of Hari, which prompted her to renounce her life for the salvation of her own and her husband's soul, giving no heed whatever to the importunities of her friends or the admonitions of the world. The sincerity of her religious conviction far outweighed every other worldly consideration; and no fear or temptation could deter her from her resolute purpose, despite its singularly shocking character. It was the depth of a similar religious conviction and earnestness of purpose that led Joan of Arc to suffer martyrdom on a funeral pile. When asked by the executioner if she believed in the reality of her mission, "Yes," she firmly replied, while the flames were ascending

around her. "My voices were of God. All that I have done was by the command of God. No, my voices did not deceive me. My revelations were of God." "Nothing more was heard from her but invocations to God, interrupted by her long drawn agony. So dense were the clouds of smoke, that at one time she could not be seen. A sudden gust of wind turned the current of the whirlwind, and Jeanne was seen for a few moments. She gave one terrific cry, pronounced the name of Jesus, bowed her head, and the spirit returned to God who gave it. Thus perished Jeanne, the maid of Orleans;" and thus perished Bhagabati Dási, my aunt.

About the year 1813, Rámmohan Roy published a pamphlet, in which he very clearly exposed the barbarous character of the rite of burning widows alive. He was unfortunately backed only by few friends. The orthodox party was then very strong, and included the most influential and wealthy portion of the Hindoo community. Mahárájá Tejchandra Báhádur of Burdwan, Rájás Gopimohan and Rádhákánto Báhádurs, Promothonáth Dey, Baishnabchandra Mallik, Rámmohan Mallik and, in fact, the entire aristocracy of Calcutta, were enlisted on the side of opposition. The "Sumáchár Chándriká," the recognized organ of the *Dharmo Shabha*, edited by Bhabáni Charan Banerji, vilified Rámmohan Roy as an outcast and infidel, and persecuted those who were bold enough to avow their sentiments in favour of the abolition of this inhuman practice. Rámmohan Roy, almost single-handed, encountered this formidable opposition; he fought for a just and righteous but not a popular cause, regardless alike of the consequences of social persecution and the threats and scoffs of his orthodox countrymen. Patiently, but steadily and consistently, he worked his way, until at last, his appeal finding a responsive echo in a Christian heart, that noble-minded Governor-General—Lord William Bentinck—put a stop to the practice. That eminent statesman had many a conference with Rámmohan Roy on the propriety or otherwise of abolish-

ing this shocking practice. The anti-abolitionists presented a memorial to Government, urging that it would be an unjustifiable interference with the religious usages of the country. That wise Governor-General, who was very anxious to preserve in full integrity the solemn pledge of Government as to a neutral policy in matters of religion, consulted the distinguished Orientalist, Mr. H. H. Wilson, on the subject; and finally came to the resolution of abolishing this inhuman institution throughout the British dominion in the East. But before giving effect to the resolution, he recorded in a Minute that the authoritative abolition of the practice would be an outrageous violation of the engagement of the Supreme Government. Accordingly his Lordship observed: "I must acknowledge that a similar opinion, as to the probable excitation of a deep distrust of our future intentions, was mentioned to me in conversation by that enlightened Native, Rámmohan Roy, a warm advocate for the abolition of Sati, and of all other superstitions and corruptions engrafted on the Hindoo religion, which he considers originally to have been a pure deism. It was his opinion that the practice might be suppressed quietly and unobservedly by increasing the difficulties, and by the indirect agency of the Police. He apprehended that any public enactment would give rise to general apprehension; that the reasoning would be, while the English were contending for power, deemed it politic to allow universal toleration and to respect our religion; but having obtained the supremacy, their first act is a violation of their professions; and the next will probably be, like Mahomedan conquerors, to force upon us their own religion."

The argument urged by Government was as reasonable as its conduct was compatible with its known policy. But it must be mentioned to the credit of an enlightened Government, that its generous exertions have effectually healed one of the most shocking wounds inflicted by inhuman superstition upon our unhappy country.

XXII.

MARRIED LIFE IN BENGAL.

THE subject of our marriage ceremonies having been dealt with at great length, it only remains to be seen how far a married life in Bengal is conducive to happiness. The system of early marriage that prevails here has been justly condemned by all civilized nations, and it is really a marvel that parties so capriciously affianced in early age can live happily together afterwards to the end of their lives. The young bride, between ten and eleven years of age, generally simple, artless, and unlettered, even in the case of a respectable family, is brought up almost from her cradle to look upon her future lord with feelings of extreme submissiveness. She is a perfect stranger to freedom of action, if not actually to freedom of thought. When her reasoning faculties are somewhat developed, and she grows tired of a monotonous, slavish existence, she naturally struggles to be free; but fate has otherwise ordained it. The apartment in which she lives, the atmosphere she breathes, the mode of life she is enjoined to follow, the society she moves in, and the surroundings by which she is fenced,—all attest the very abnormal restraints to which she is at all hours of her life subjected after her marriage. But she cannot absolutely suppress human nature. With the development of her passions and desires, the fetters of servitude gradually relax, she pants for a little freedom, because absolute freedom is denied her by the peculiar conventional rules by which she is governed, and as a necessary consequence of this, she is per-

mitted to move about half unveiled within the precincts of her secluded domicile. And when she becomes the mother of two or three children through the blessing of the goddess *Shastí*, the conventional restraints by degrees give way, until through her age she becomes the *ginní*, or mistress, of the house, a position which gives a great extension to her privileges. She then, in her turn, assumes the duties and discipline of the household, and seeks to correct any little impropriety she sees in its inmates.

An Englishman who is but superficially acquainted with the inner life of Hindoo society, is apt to conclude from what is stated above that a native woman, hampered by so many restraints, can seldom become happy in the proper sense of the word; but however paradoxical this may appear, the reverse is true. She feels quite happy and contented when Providence gives her what she values over every other worldly consideration,—namely, a good husband, and dutiful sons and daughters. Brought up in a state of perfect isolation and practically confined to restricted thought and action, her happiness is necessarily identified with that of a few beings who are near and dear to her. Although married when she is scarcely capable of thinking and judging for herself, yet, through the kind dispensation of an overruling Providence, she is destined in most cases to enjoy the blessings of a married life. The rites and ceremonies by which she is early united in the bonds of wedlock exert little or no influence on her in her maturer years. Her love and affection overcomes every difficulty, and removes every obstacle in her way. She becomes happy in spite of the domestic and social restrictions imposed on her by what Shakespeare calls the "Monster Custom." The gravity of the marriage compact is due to the religious incantations used on the occasion. Though their precise meaning is scarcely understood by either the boy-husband or the girl-wife, the influence of conventionalism is so powerful that a few words pronounced by the officiating priest serve as absolutely binding

on both to the end of their lives. Nor can it be otherwise. As they advance in years, their mutual love and affection cements the bond of union that was so casually and capriciously formed. And even where the individual tempers, dispositions, habits, and ideas are irreconcilable, as is sometimes the case, open rupture between the parties is very rare, if not altogether impossible. In respectable families in which a husband is educated and a wife not educated, and moreover ill-tempered, a sense of honor and propriety, which is shocked at the slightest whisper of scandal, restrains the former from having recourse to a separation from the latter, even if he were so disposed. Thus we see the very difference in their characters and dispositions gradually overcome. The law of divorce was not known in the country before the English came into it. The fear of scandal, even where there is sufficient justification for it, suppresses everything at its incipient stage.

So great is the value set on female chastity by the Hindoos, that a good wife is regarded as the very emblem of *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Hence the idea of a separation from her is associated with ominous consequences. When she dies after having lived with her husband for a certain number of years, the bereavement is considered so serious a calamity that he calls himself "*a homeless man*," meaning thereby that the being that presided over the household and kept everything that was most lovely and loving there had departed. Two of the greatest Bengali millionaires of the present century—Babus Rámdulál Dey and Matilál Seal—used emphatically to say that they were mainly indebted for their colossal fortunes to their wives, who, though uneducated, were nevertheless consulted by them in all their important domestic affairs. In the case of both these millionaires, the establishment of alms-houses in the suburbs of Calcutta was the result of the suggestions of their respective wives. From this it is easy to understand what great importance is attached to the advice of good wives in all secular matters of any

moment. The Hindoos certainly are different from the people of the West in their matrimonial rites, but they resemble them to a great extent in the genuine love and affection between the husband and wife so long as they exist.

There was, indeed, a time when the alumni of our colleges did not regard their wives as they should, by reason of the ignorance of the latter, for which they were keenly satirised in popular ballads by a well-known Bengali poet; but such crotchets have long since been given up to pave the way for the growth of kindlier feelings and warmer attachment. In the first transitional state of a people long steeped in ignorance, a revolutionary spirit, verging almost on ultra-radicalism, often manifests itself, denouncing the existing order of things, and striving to substitute for it what is thought a healthier system, better fitted to promote the well-being of society. About forty years since, a controversy on the subject arose between the Rev. W. Adam, Editor of the *India Gazette*, and Mr. H. L. V. Derozio, Editor of the *East Indian*—the one strongly deprecating what was called rash innovation, the other as warmly defending it on the part of the alumni of our colleges; but all thoughtful men agreed with the former, because a spirit of rash innovation conceived in haste and carried out with impetuosity can never achieve what a slow and steady progress can in the social and moral regeneration of a people. And the voice of posterity has abundantly demonstrated the wisdom of Mr. Adam's dictum. Sobered down by reflection and experience, the rising generation of educated natives more fully understand and appreciate the grave responsibilities of married life.

Amongst the great mass of the people who are destitute of the superior advantages of knowledge, and are consequently incapable of appreciating the solemn responsibilities of a married life, it is gratifying to observe that, notwithstanding their rough and rude manners, they are not, in the generality of cases, strangers to conjugal felicity. Though, as the lament-

ed Mr. Aberigh-Mackay justly says, "famine is the horizon of the Indian villager, and insufficient food is the foreground, he is ever thinking of making those who are naturally dependent on him comfortable and happy. Amid an easeful and luscious splendour, and a fertile soil and a glorious climate, he labours and starves;" but he is never without a thought about those whom he has left behind. If it were not for them, he would not have toiled so hard and exposed his jaded life to all the bitter and biting inclemencies of the weather. His love for his wife and children is spontaneous; it swells up from his heart without any effort. It is only in the quiet "bosom scenes" of life that proofs of genuine love are to be met with. There is an ineffable charm in such scenes around the domestic hearth of a poor villager. "That the blush of morning is fair, that the quietude of grief is sacred, that the heroism of conscience is noble, who can undertake to prove to one who does not see it?" So genuine rustic love, like wisdom and holiness, is an immeasurable thing, appreciable only by pure affection and a thorough insight into the realities of rustic life. Such threads of love, says an eminent writer, are strong enough to weave the warp and woof of life.

Before the diffusion of Western knowledge throughout the land, the love of wife was held in subordination to the love of parents, but of late years a change has come over the spirit of the times, which has greatly modified the former rule. The present state of native society in Bengal affords abundant proofs that the educated young men, much after the fashion of the enlightened Europeans, with whom they come in daily contact, and whose mode of life they approve so much, find it in many instances opposed to the enjoyment of conjugal felicity to follow the directions and act up to the wishes of their parents in all their domestic concerns. As the result of this feeling, the wife of the young man is tacitly allowed to follow a line of conduct of her own, derogatory to, and subversive of, parental rule, which is a frequent source of domestic

unhappiness. In good old times, such a line of conduct was not only severely condemned, but practically discountenanced. In fact, the mischief was nipped in the bud. Thus it is evident that English education has not only wrought a change in the moral and intellectual character of the rising generation, but has likewise profoundly affected its social conditions. Nor is this a matter of wonder. The enlightened principles and views which the progress of education engenders naturally make its recipients desirous to break through the trammels of servitude and assume that independence which is the natural birthright of humanity. Even the mind of a native woman, endungeoned as it is in ignorance, pants to breathe a free atmosphere amid the thousand conventional restraints by which it is surrounded. Hence the influence of a wife whose husband is well-to-do in the world not unfrequently prevails over that of a mother in the zenana, which is one of the marked peculiarities of the present native society.

An Englishman, who has no access to the recesses of a Hindoo zenana, and is often apt to regard the female inmates of it as beings quite incapable of mental culture or the finer susceptibilities of "divine humanity," will, however, hardly be struck with wonder when he comes to learn that great multitudes of them "laugh and cry and hope and fear just as the English do." Their love of children, ornaments or money, is a peculiarity which is more or less shared by other civilized nations in Europe. It is in the zenana that Hindoo human nature is seen at its best, and its characteristics made most visible. It is true that the females have no cosmopolitan views or a sense of patriotism, and hence their love of barbaric pearl and gold, which bears a resemblance, however remote, to the taste of the well-to-do English ladies, who annually spend very large sums of money on jewellery and millinery. The difference between the Hindoo and English ladies, supposing both were placed in nearly the same circumstances, is, that the former invest large sums in jewellery, partly for show, but

chiefly for safe investment, that it may be readily utilized in times of need, and ultimately prove a sheetanchor against the bitterest blasts of adversity; the latter do the same chiefly for display and fashion more or less, heedless of the reverses of fortune. A fashionable English lady is, in reality, not a leader, but a slave of that fashion to which she consecrates her existence. When the ruling *modiste* offers her something new, she must have it at any cost. A Bengali lady exercises far greater discretion in this respect. But there is a striking similarity in the conduct of both when love, tenderness, devotion, and domestic economy are concerned.

Properly speaking, a Hindoo married lady is a stranger to all the elegancies of a fashionable life, to all the pleasures of society, to all the refined amusements of a civilized people; but she is none the less fitted, like her English sister, to cheerfully participate with her husband in all the sad reverses of fortune. Though destitute of the blessing of mental accomplishments, yet her example, her patience, her power of endurance, and above all her fidelity and devotion, when misfortune befalls her husband, call forth the dormant energies of her nature and impart a healthy stimulus to his exertions, which oftentimes enables him to rise above misfortune and to retrieve his position in the world.

XXIII.

THE STORY OF THE SABITRI BRATA, OR THE WONDERFUL TRIUMPH OF CONJUGAL LOVE.

IN the halcyon days of the Hindoo *ráj*, when religion was regarded as the mortar of society, and righteousness the cement of domestic happiness, when Judhisthira the Just inculcated, by precept and example, the inflexible rules of moral rectitude, there reigned in the country of Madra a very pious, truthful, wise and benevolent king, named *Aswapati.* For a long time he had no child, which made him extremely unhappy. Seeing that the evening of his life was drawing nearer every day, and there was no sign of the approach of the wished-for consummation, he undertook to perform a grand religious ceremony with the object of obtaining a son and heir, and daily made ten thousand offerings to please the goddess Sabitri, from whom the boon was expected.

Thus passed away several long and painful years, at the end of which it came to pass that the goddess Sabitri one day suddenly appeared before him in the shape of a beautiful woman, and told him that she was ready to grant him any boon he might ask for, because she was well pleased with him for his austere asceticism, for the purity and sincerity of his heart, for the strict observance of his vow, and for his firm, unshaken faith in her. As was to be expected, he prayed for a goodly number of sons, affirming that without offspring the

life of man upon earth is but a wilderness, and the transitory sunshine of bliss is changed into the settled gloom of chaos.

The goddess said that, knowing this to be his cherished desire, she had gone to the Creator (Brahmá) to consult him as to the best means for its realization, and through his mercy he would soon be blessed with a female child, in every way worthy of such a pious and virtuous father. Her beauty would shed a lustre around her name, and the fame of her rare gifts of nature would spread far and wide. She would be the cynosure of all princely eyes, and her charms would radiate in all directions. So saying, the goddess disappeared, and the king returned to his own capital.

In a short time, the eldest queen became pregnant, and, in due course of time, gave birth to a daughter of matchless beauty. The king and his Bráhman friends called her Sabitri, after the name of the goddess who granted the boon. Day by day, the princess grew fairer and fairer, and soon passed from smiling childhood into blooming youth. Every one that saw her chiselled features and prepossessing appearance believed that some angelic beauty—the embodiment of loveliness itself—had descended upon earth in the shape of this lovely damsel. Indeed, she was so surpassingly beautiful that no prince, however great or eminent he might be, dared seek her hand in marriage lest his suit should be spurned.

The king, Aswapati, thought of marrying his only daughter, then in his fulness and freshness of youth, to some one worthy of the honor. For some time no royal suitors ventured to solicit her hand for the reasons stated above. At length, Sabitri sought and obtained her father's permission to secure for herself a suitable match. In complying with her request, the father moreover allowed her to take with her in her travels some of the wisest ministers of the State, whose experience and counsel should be available to her in so momentous an affair. Riding in a golden chariot, and accompanied by a

number of grey-headed ministers, she left the capital with the benedictions of the hereditary priests, and journeyed far and wide through many unknown countries, visiting on her way some of the most delightful hermitages of the venerable old *Rishis* who are absorbed in meditation.

Sometime after, while the king was attending to the duties of the State, and conversing with that renowned Sage Nárada, Sabitri with the ministers returned home from her peregrinations. The princess, seeing her father talking with the great Rishi Nárada, bowed her head down in token of due homage to the venerable Rishi and her respected father. The bustle consequent on the first interview after a long absence being over, Narada asked the king: "O monarch, where did your daughter go? Whence is she now coming? It is high time that you should give her marriage to some noble prince worthy of her hand." The king replied, "O revered Rishi, I sent her abroad with some of my wisest ministers in quest of some noble prince, who, to a beautiful person should add all the rarest gifts of wisdom, courage, piety and virtue: now hear from her own mouth how far she has succeeded in her sacred mission." So saying, the king desired Sabitri to tell them whom she had chosen for her husband. Sabitri, in obedience to her esteemed father's behest, thus spoke in a tone becoming her age and sex: "Father, a pious king, named Dyumutsen, once ruled the kingdom of Sala. A few days after his accession he lost both his eyes and became totally blind. At that time, his only child was in his infancy, quite incapable of conducting the affairs of the kingdom. His treacherous enemies, taking advantage of his blindness and the infancy of his child, invaded his kingdom and wrested it from his hand. The dethroned king and his beloved queen with their infant child betook themselves to a quiet life of contemplation in an adjacent wood, renouncing all the pleasures of a wicked, ungrateful world. For some years they passed their days in the sequestered wood amidst the abodes of many revered

sages, who took a special delight in imbuing the nascent mind of the boy with the germs of moral and religious instruction, promising a full development in maturer years. He was in every way my equal, and him have I chosen as my worthy husband. His name is Satyavána."

Hearing this, the hoary headed Rishi, Nárada, thus addressed the monarch: "O monarch, I am grieved to say that your daughter has been unfortunate in her choice, in having thoughtlessly selected the virtuous Satyavána as her husband." The king feelingly enquired: "O great Rishi, are the noble qualities of valour, prudence, forgiveness, piety, devotion, generosity, filial love and affection to be found in Satyavana?" Nárada answered, "Satyavána is Surya's (the sun's) equal in matchless glory; he is wise as Virihashpati himself, brave and warlike as Indra, mild and forgiving as Earth." The king asked: "Is the prince sincere worshipper of God, walking in the path of righteousness? Is he beautiful, amiable, and high-minded?" Nárada replied, "O king, like Ratideva, the son of Sankriti, the beautiful Satyavána, is generous; like Sibi, the son of Usinara, he is a lover of God and Truth; he is as high-minded as Yayáti; all the pious old Rishis and other good men believe that Satyavána is brave, mild, meek, truthful, faithful to his friends, magnanimous, pious, and sincere in devotion and earnestness." The king again asked: "O venerable sage, you have named all the good qualities that can ennoble humanity; be kind enough to inform me in what he is wanting." "He has one great disqualification," said Nárada, "which is enough to outweigh all his virtues: his life upon earth is very short; he is fated to live exactly one year from this day."

Hearing the fearful prophecy of Nárada, the king tried his best to dissuade his daughter from the fatal alliance, but all his efforts proved unavailing. Sabitri, firm and constant in her plighted faith, fearlessly replied, that, despite the ominous prediction, suggestive of premature widowhood, she could

not retract her pledge and surrender her heart to any other being upon earth.

Nárada then exclaimed; "O king, I see your daughter is true to her promise, firm in her faith, and constant in her love and attachment to Satyavána. No one will be able to lead her astray from the path of righteousness. Let the unrivalled pair, therefore, be united in the sacred bond of wedlock." The king replied, "O great Rishi, unalterable are your words; what you have now said is just and right. As you are my *Guru* (spiritual guide), I will do what you have ordered me to do." "Heaven's choicest blessings be upon you all," said Nárada, and departed.

The king now directed his attention to the solemnization of the nuptials of his beloved daughter with becoming pomp and *eclat.*

The fair daughter of Aswapati was thus married in due form to Satyavána, the son of the blind old king, Dyumutsen. For a while the happy pair continued to enjoy all the blessings of conjugal life in their blissful and retired cottage, remote from the busy throng of men, and quite congenial to religious meditation, though Sabitri knew full well, as predestined by *Bidhátá*, that this short and transient happiness would be soon followed by long and painful suffering, which would very nigh destroy them both.

Thus week after week and month after month rolled away, till at length the prophetic day on which the terrible doom was to be pronounced upon Satyavána drew nearer and nearer; and when Sabitri saw that there remained only four days to complete the terrible year, perhaps the last year of Satyavána's life, at the end of which the fatal torch of *Yama* would appear before her beloved husband, her heart recoiled at the idea. To avert the dreadful doom she undertook the performance of an austere vow, which strictly enjoined three days of continuous fasting and prayer, pouring forth at the feet of the Almighty all the fervours of a devo-

tional heart. Her father-in-law, Dyumutsen, though overwhelmed by the surging wave of grief, endeavoured to dissuade her from undertaking so trying a vow; but his admonition was quite ineffectual. She persistently adhered to her resolution, and calmly resigned herself to the dispensations of a wise and merciful Providence.

Mental conflict, internal perturbation, and continuous fasting made her weak and emaciated, and the prophetic words of Nárada incessantly haunted her mind like some fatal vision. It is quite impossible to describe the violent struggles that passed within her when that terrible day at last arrived, when the inevitable decree of fate, by which her dear husband should for ever cease to live, would be fulfilled. After bathing in the sacred stream she made burnt offerings to the gods, and prostrated herself on the ground, as a mark of profound homage, at the honoured feet of the old Rishis, and those of her revered father-in-law and mother-in-law, who in return heartily pronounced their sincere benedictions upon her. When the hour for dinner came, she was desired to partake of some refreshment, especially after three days' continuous fasting; but animated by a fervent spirit of devotion she declined to take any food before sunset.

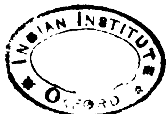
Presently she saw her husband going to the forest with his axe and a bag, to procure fruits and dry wood. Sabitri begged to accompany him; but from the prescience of imminent danger as well as from the warmth of affection he would fain keep her at home, being assured that her tender feet were not fitted to wander in the "brambly wilderness" in her present enfeebled state of body; but regardless of all admonition she thus exclaimed: "O my beloved Lord, I am not at all weary with fasting; your very presence is my strongest support. I can never be happy without you, so do not turn a deaf ear to the earnest entreaty of an already disconsolate wife, whose fate is bound up with yours in a gordian knot which no earthly force can break or cut." Satyavána was at

last constrained to yield to her solicitations, and bade her ask his father and mother's permission before her departure. It was with the greatest reluctance that their permission was given. Obtaining their benedictions, and being armed with the panoply of divine grace, the unhappy pair quitted their sweet home for the dreary forest. On the way, Satyavána, half conscious of what would soon befall him, addressed his loving wife in the following affectionate words: "O dear Sabitri, behold how nature smiles in all her beauty; how the fields are adorned with fragrant flowers, shady groves, and a wide expanse of living verdure; how slowly and smoothly runs the murmuring brook with soothing melody; how the warblers of the forest pour forth their wild but sweet notes without fear of molestation; how merrily the peacock is dancing; how cheerfully the stag is frisking about; and above all, how the stillness of the scene invites the mind to contemplation."

While Sabitri was attentively listening to her husband's descriptive illustration of nature, her heart swelled in her bosom, but her eyes were not sullied with even one tear-drop. She continued to follow her husband as a faithful, obedient wife.

At length they entered the forest, and Satyavána, after filling his bag with various kinds of fruits, began to cut with his axe the withered branches of the trees. The effort soon overpowered him, and he felt some uneasy sensation about his head. He slowly walked down to his dear wife, and observed: "O much beloved Sabitri, I have suddenly got an acute headache, which is becoming more and more painful; it makes me quite insensible, and almost kills me. I cannot stand here any longer; but I trust, by the aid of balmy sleep, soon to regain my health and strength."

On hearing her husband's heart-rending words, she sat down upon the ground and placed Satyavána's head upon her lap. But, as fate had ordained, he soon became perfectly insensible. When Sabitri saw this, her wonted presence of mind did not



fail her; trusting, however, in the boundless mercy of an overruling Providence, she calmly and composedly waited for the ill-fated hour, when the shadow of death would hide for ever her beloved Satyavána—a doom she was herself prepared to share. Suddenly she thought she shaw a grim figure, clothed in red and resplendent with lustre like the sun, slowly approaching her, with a chain in his hand. This was not a figment of her imagination. The veritable *Yama* (Pluto) stood beside Satyavána, and looked steadfastly upon him.

No sooner did Sabitri see him than taking her husband's head from her lap, and placing it upon the ground, with trembling heart he thus addressed him: "God-like person, your heavenly form and majestic appearance declare unmistakably that you are a god among gods. Vouchsafe to reveal yourself and tell me your will."

Yama replied: "O Sabitri, you are chaste and constant in your devotion and meditation; I, therefore, feel no delicacy in satisfying your eager inquiry. I am Yama (Pluto). I am come here for the purpose of carrying away your dead husband as his days upon earth are numbered." To this Sabitri said, "O king, I have heard that it is your messengers that carry away the dead bodies from the earth; why are you then come yourself?"

Yama replied, "O amiable Sabitri, your excellent husband, while living, possessed many good qualities, and was justly remarkable for his righteousness. It would have been improper, therefore, to send my imps to carry him away. With this view I am come myself." So saying Yama forcibly drew out the finger-shaped soul from Satyavána's body. Being deprived of the vital spirit, the body became motionless, pale and pallid; and Yama went towards the South. The chaste Sabitri, in order to obtain the fruit of her vow, followed him with sad looks and a heavy heart. Seeing this, Yama remonstrated with her, and ordered her to return home and perform the funeral obsequies of her husband. Sabitri said, she would go

wherever her husband was carried, and that by her unceasing prayer to the Almighty, by her firm faith in her spiritual guide, by the solemn fulfilment of her sacred vow, and by his (Yama's) grace, her course would be free and unrestrained. "O king of the infernal regions," said she, "kindly deign to lend a listening ear to a suppliant's prayer. He that has not obtained a complete mastery over his senses should not come to the forest to lead there either a domestic life, or a student's life, or the life of a devotee. Those who have effectually controlled their passions are fit to fulfil the necessary conditions of the four different modes of life. Of these four modes, the domestic life is decidedly the best, being most favourable to the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, and to the cultivation of piety and virtue. Persons like myself do not desire to lead any other than a domestic life."

"Now return home, O fair Sabitri; I am much pleased with your wise observations; I am willing to grant you any boon save the life of your husband," exclaimed Yama. Sabitri replied, "O king, be graciously pleased to restore eye-sight to my blind father-in-law; and make him powerful as the Sun or the Fire, that he may be enabled to regain his kingdom and rule it with vigour." Yama granted the boon, and directed her to return home after the fatiguing journey. Sabitri answering said, "O virtuous king, I feel no trouble or fatigue while I am with my husband, for a husband is the strength and stay of his wife, and the wife is the sharer of her husband's weal or woe:

> The wife, where danger or dishonor lurks,
> Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
> Who guards her, or with her the worst endures.

Wherever, therefore, you carry my husband, my footsteps will dog you thither. Our very first intercourse with the good and the righteous leads to the growth of confidence and kindly feeling, which is always productive of the most beneficial results." Whereupon Yama replied, "O thoughtful lady, your

words are agreeable to my heart; they are fraught with good sense. I shall willingly grant you any other boon save the life of your husband." "Allow me, then, O virtuous king, to ask for a hundred begotten sons to my father, who has no son," said Sabitri.

"I grant the boon," said Yama; "now that all your wishes have been consummated, do not continue to follow me any longer. You are far away from your father-in-law's cottage; return home at once."

Sabitri replied, "O virtuous king, we are apt to repose more confidence in the righteous than in ourselves; their kindness amply requites our love and regard." Yama said, "I am very much satisfied with your edifying speech, and am disposed to grant you another boon." Sabitri, feeling grateful for the several boons granted unto her, presumed this time to ask for the resurrection of her husband as well as for the birth from them of a hundred powerful, wise and virtuous sons, to be the glory of the country and the ornament of society.

"Be it so," said Yama cheerfully, and disappeared.

It is obvious that the fertile imagination of the hereditary priests of Hindoosthan, who, from their traditional mental abstraction, delighted more in the concoction of legendary lore than of the solid, sober realities of life, invented the story of this *Brata*, or vow, mainly for the consolation of ignorant females, to soften the hardships of widowhood, than which a more unmitigated evil is not to be found in the domestic economy of the Hindoos. The unhallowed institution of the immolation of widows alive was primarily traceable to the dread of this terrible calamity, which preyed, as it were, on the vitals of humanity. Hence the performance of this Brata is the culminating point of meritorious work in popular estimation, promising to the performer the perpetual enjoyment of connubial happiness, which is more valued by a Hindoo woman than all the riches of Golconda.

It is annually celebrated in the Bengalee month of Joysta,

both by widows and by women whose husbands are alive; by the former, in the hope of averting the evil in another life, by the latter, in the expectation of continuing to enjoy conjugal bliss both in this world and the next. On the celebration of this *Brata* on the fourteenth night of the decrease of the moon, the husband, being dressed in clean new clothes, is made to sit on a carpet, the wife, previously washing and drying his feet, puts round his neck a garland of flowers, and worships him with sandal and flowers, wrestling hard in prayer for his prolonged life. This being done, she provides for him a good dinner, consisting of different kinds of fruits, sweetmeats, sweet and sour milk and ghee-fried *luchis*, &c. It should be mentioned here that a widow offers the same homage to the god, Narayan, in the place of a husband. The usual incantation is read by the priest, and she repeats it inaudibly, the substance being in harmony with her cherished desire. He gets his usual fee of two or four rupees and all the offerings in rice, fruits, sweetmeats, clothes, brass utensils, &c. A woman has to perform this *Brata* regularly for fourteen long years; after which the expense becomes tenfold more, in clothes, bedding, brass utensils, and an entertainment to Bráhmans, friends and neighbours, than in the ordinary previous years.

Besides the *Bratas* described above, there are many others of more or less note, which are annually observed by vast numbers of females, who, from their early religious tendencies, seem to enjoy a monopoly of them. It is, however, a singular fact that the primary object of all these religious vows is the possession of all sorts of worldly happiness, seldom supplemented by a desire of endless blessedness hereafter. This is unquestionably a lamentable defect in the original conception and design of the popular Hindoo Shastras, clearly demonstrating their superficiality and poverty.

APPENDIX.

Note A.

OBSERVANCES AND RITES DURING PREGNANCY.

From the period of conception a woman is enjoined by way of precaution to live under certain rules and restrictions, the observance of which is to ensure a safe delivery as well as the safety of the offspring. She is not allowed to put on clothes over which birds of the air have flown, lest their return might prolong the period of her delivery. She fastens a knot to one end of the *ánchal* of her *sari** and keeps it tied about her waist, and spits on her breast once a day before washing her body, and is not allowed to sit or walk in the open compound in order to avoid evil spirits ; as a safeguard against their inroads, she constantly wears in the knot of her hair a slender reed five inches long.

When in a state of pregnancy, a Hindoo female is treated with peculiar care, tenderness, and affection. She is generally brought from her father-in-law's house to that of her father, where all the members of the family show her the greatest love lest she should not survive the throes of childbirth. Indeed, the first confinement of a young Hindoo girl is justly considered a struggle between life and death. As a religious safeguard and guarantee for safe delivery, she is made to wear round her neck a small *maduli* (a very small casket made of gold, silver, or copper), containing some flowers previously consecrated to *Bábá Thákur*,† and to drink daily, until her delivery, a few drops of holy water touching it with the *maduli*.

It is perhaps generally known that a Hindoo girl is married between nine and twelve years of age—an age when her European sister

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* A *sári* is a piece of cloth, five yards long, with colored borders.

† A Hindoo god generally kept by the lower orders of the people, such as *Domes*, *Chárâls*, and *Bágdis*.

would not even dream of marriage; and the natural consequence is, she becomes a mother at thirteen or fourteen years. An eminent writer, who had studied the subject carefully, thus remarks: "Till their thirteenth year, they are stout and vigorous; but after that period, they alter much faster than the women in any of the nations of Europe." Her tender age, her sedentary life, her ignorance of the laws of hygiene, the common dread of childbirth, the want of proper midwives as well as of timely medical aid (should any be necessary), conspire sometime to cause an untimely death. She must continue to observe many precautions until her accouchement is completed.

In the fifth month of her pregnancy takes place her *kánchá shád.** The day must be an auspicious one according to Hindoo astrologers, and she is treated that day with special indulgence, inasmuch as all the delicacies of the season are given to her without restriction. In the seventh month she is treated with *bhájá shád*, when she eats with a few other females (whose husbands and children are all alive) all sorts of parched peas and rice, as well as *methais* and other sweetmeats. In the ninth month, the *Panchámrita*† ceremony is held, when she is made to wear a red-bordered *akhanda* sari (a piece of cloth ten cubits long with the edges uncut), which is preserved with the greatest care, lest any jealous and mischievous woman who has lost her children should clandestinely cut and take away a portion of the same, which is considered a very portentous omen for the preservation of the newborn babe.

On the celebration of *panchámrita* above mentioned, the officiating priest, after repeating the usual incantation, pours into her mouth a little of the delicacies, without the same coming in contact with her teeth. She is forbidden to eat anything else that day except fruits and sweetmeats; and then a good day is appointed for the

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* *Kánchá* means raw; the term *shád* is synonymous with desire. The ceremony is so called from the female being allowed that day to eat all kinds of native pickles, preserves, sweetmeats, confectionery, several kinds of fruits then in season, sweet and sour milk, &c., but not rice or any sort of food grains. Her desire is gratified, lest the girl should not survive the childbirth. It should be mentioned here that, from the second month of her pregnancy, she feels a great longing to eat pátkhol᷃á (a sort of half-burnt, very thin earthen cake) which pregnant girls relish very much on account of its peculiar flavour.

† *Panchámrita* means five kinds of delicacies, the food of the gods, consisting of milk, ghee (clarified butter), dahie (curded milk), sugar, and honey.

celebration of the grand final *shád*, when all the female relatives and connections of the family are invited.*

On the day appointed an awning is put up over the courtyard of the house. *Palkis* are sent to each of the families invited; and the guests (nearest female relatives) begin to come in from ten in the morning. A general spirit of hilarity prevails on all sides; noise and bustle ensue; the women are busy in receiving their guests; preparations are being made for the grand feast; the men outside direct the *palki*-bearers where next to go; the little children have their own share of juvenile frolic; the young damsels and the aged matrons are seen speaking to their respective friends with mutual love, affection, and confidence; and signs of joviality and conviviality are seen everywhere. It is on such occasions that women unbosom themselves to each other, and freely and unreservedly communicate their feelings, their thoughts, their wishes—nay their secrets—to friends of congenial spirit and temper; their conversation knows no end; their

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* In Calcutta, Hindoo females of respectability are not permitted to be seen, much less to walk in the streets; they live in a state of perfect seclusion, entirely apart from the male members of the family,—it being considered a very great disgrace should a respectable female be in any way exposed to public gaze. The very construction of a Hindoo family dwelling-house clearly indicates the prevalence of the close zenana system; the inmates must have an inner and an outer apartment; there must be an inclosed courtyard reached by tortuous passages, closed by low doors through which one has to wriggle rather than to walk; the sun seldom shines into it; with small contracted staircases and foul confined air, there is no circulation or ventilation: the noxious effluvia evaporating from this or that side of the house, especially from the lower floor, is a nuisance which the inmates tolerate with scarcely any complaint. The drainage and waterworks have certainly effected considerable improvement towards the promotion of cleanliness; but still the dirty and filthy state of most of the family dwelling-houses is notorious. By a small door only there exists a communication between the inner and outer apartment. Should the house be a small one, say from three to four *kátás*, which is generally the case in such a crowded city as Calcutta, and should the women talk loud enough to be heard by men outside, they are not only instantly checked, but severely reprimanded for the liberty. The great privacy of the close zenana system is, however, broken by females being obliged to travel in a railway carriage. Though Hindoos of rank, whenever they have occasion to go on pilgrimage by rail, generally engage a reserved compartment for the females, yet they cannot manage to preserve absolute privacy when going into or coming out of the carriage at the Railway Stations.

amiable loveliness almost spontaneously developes itself; they unburden their minds of the heavy load of accumulated thoughts; their joys and sorrows, their happiness and misery, their sympathy and emotion, pleasurable or painful, have their full scope. If they are naturally garrulous, they become more so at such a jovial assemblage, so that one can dive deepest down into their hearts on such an occasion. Many a matrimonial match is proposed and matured at such meetings; and, to crown the whole, sisters of kindred spirit embrace each other with all the warmth of genuine love and affection. If their minds are contracted by reason of scanty culture, their hearts are full of affection, sympathy, and susceptibility, which cannot fail to exercise a beneficial influence on human nature.

On such occasions, women are allowed to have some amusement or *támáshá*, according to their liking; but of course not such as betrays a vitiated taste, overstepping the bounds of decorum, which was the case some years back. Dancing girls and *Pánchálleys* (bands of female singers) are entertained, who contribute not a little to the amusement of the assembled guests. Immured within the walls of a close zenana, they are seldom suffered to enjoy such unrestrained liberty. Otto of roses, rose-water out of gold or silver pots, nosegays, and *pán*, or betel, are freely distributed among them. They sit on benches or chairs, or squat down barefooted on *forash bichháná* (a clean white sheet), and enjoy the *támáshá* to their hearts' content. These amusements continue till evening, entertaining the guests with songs on gods and goddesses (Durgá, Krishna and his mistress Rádhá): those relating to Durgá have a reference to the ill-treatment she experienced at the hands of her parents, but those pertaining to Krishna and Rádhá tell of his juvenile frolics with his mother and the milkmaids, and amorous songs on disappointed love, which, though they may appear harmless to their worshippers, have nevertheless a partial tendency to debase the mind. By way of encouragement, the singing and dancing girls receive, besides their hire, presents of money, clothes, and shawls, according to the circumstances of the parties retaining them. To do our women justice, however, it is pleasing to reflect that the progress of enlightenment has, of late years, wrought a salutary change in their minds. Instead of the former *kabis* (songs), which were shamefully characterized by the worst species of obscenity and immorality, they have imbibed a taste for more sober and refined entertainments. Moral and intellectual improvement amongst perfectly secluded females is a sure harbinger of national regeneration. The young and the sprightly, as is naturally to be expected, enjoy these amusements most; but the more elderly and thoughtful females make the best of

the opportunity in conversation about domestic affairs with those of their own age and kinship. They have certainly no distaste for these frivolous entertainments, but the thoughts and cares of home press more heavily on their minds. Age and experience have taught them to regard the enjoyment of unalloyed domestic felicity as the chief end of life. A good Hindoo housewife is a model of moral excellence.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, when almost all the guests are assembled together, long parallel rows of *pirays*, or wooden seats, the one quite apart from the other—are arranged in straight lines in the courtyard, in the midst of which is placed the seat of the expectant mother, which, by way of distinction, is painted white with liquified rice paste (*álpaná*) with appropriate devices. Adorned with ornaments of glittering gold bedecked with precious stones, and dressed in an embroidered Benares *Sarí*, she walks gracefully towards her particular seat, which is a signal for others (widows excepted) to follow. They all squat down on the wooden seats, before which are placed small pieces of green plantain leaves and a few little earthen plates and a cup, intended to serve the purpose of plates and glasses. Before her stands a light, a *conch* is sounded, and a rupee, with which her forehead is touched, is kept for the gods to ensure safe delivery. Fruits of different kinds, about fifteen or sixteen sorts of sweetmeats, *luchi*, *kachuri*, *papur* (dál fried with ghee) in the shape of *chappatees*, vegetable curries of several kinds, sweet and sour milk, are provided for the guests,—the female relatives of the girl serving as stewards. No adult male member of the family is allowed to assist in the feast, because Hindoo females blush to eat before men. Being pre-eminent in point of caste, Bráhman women are served *first*. Here the rules of caste are strictly observed, and no departure therefrom is tolerated. It is not uncommon that uninvited females, or, more properly speaking, intruders, contrive by some means or other to mix with the company; but they are soon singled out by the more shrewd and experienced, and to their chagrin and disappointment, instantly removed from their seats. They do not, however, go away with curses on their lips, but receive a few things and are ordered to leave the house without a *palki*.*

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* A rather contemptible practice still lingers in the Hindoo community on such public occasions. The females for the most part lay aside a portion of the dinner for the purpose of carrying it home for their absent children; even a rich woman feels no hesitation or humiliation in following the example of her less fortunate sisters. We can only account for this unseemly practice on the supposition that the Hindoo ladies do not like to partake of good things

After the feast is over, the women, washing their hands and mouths, express their good wishes for the safe delivery of the girl, and make preparations for returning home. Here confusion and bustle ensue, consequent on the simultaneous desire of all to return home *first;* and as the sun begins to set, their anxiety becomes more intense to see the faces of their absent children; laying aside their wonted modesty, some of them almost unblushingly make a rush and enter the *first palki* that comes in their way, regardless alike of their sex and the rules of decorum. If 100 families are invited, about ten *palkis* are retained. Hackney carriages are sometimes substituted in place of *palkis;* but whatever arrangements are made, it is next to impossible to satisfy at least 200 people at one and the same time. The guests are never expected to find their own conveyances. Before coming, some of them keep the palanquin waiting for an hour or so, while they are engaged at their toilet and adorning their persons with divers ornaments. It is not unfrequently the case on such occasions that females in poor circumstances borrow ornaments from their more prosperous friends, in order to appear in society to the best advantage. In the absence of mental accomplishments, Hindoo ladies necessarily set a high value on the jewels about their persons. Some twenty years back, massive articles of gold were considered the most *recherché* ornaments, so much so that some rich ladies were adorned with gold articles alone to the weight of 6 or 7lbs. To an English lady this might appear incredible; but it is a fact which does not admit of any contradiction. Hindoo females are religiously forbidden to wear gold ornaments about their feet, it being considered a mark of disrespect to *Lakshmi* (goddess of prosperity); hence they put on pairs of massive silver *malls*, or anklets, weighing sometimes about 3lbs. Though such massive articles are a great incumbrance to the free motion of the limbs, they are nevertheless used with great pleasure. Indeed it has been sarcastically remarked that, were a Hindoo lady offered a 'gold *grindstone*' to wear round her neck, weighing some

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without sharing them with their beloved children at home. The wish is not an unnatural one, but the practice most unquestionably *is*. In making provision for a grand feast, the Hindoos are obliged to treble the quantity of food for the number of guests invited, especially when it is a *paka jalpán*, consisting of *luchis* and *sandeshes* (sweetmeats). If they invite 100 families they must provide for about 300 persons, for the reasons specified above. It is a pity that, in a matter of public entertainment, neither men nor women can resist the temptation to appropriate a portion of the food to other than the legitimate purpose.

20lbs., she would gladly accept the offer and go through the ordeal. But as the spread of English education has improved the minds of the people, it has likewise improved their taste; instead of massive gold ornaments, ladies of the present day prefer those of delicate diamond-cut workmanship, set with pearls and precious stones, such as *chik*, *sittâhâr*, *tarâhâr*, *sinti*, *tâbij*, *baju*, *jasâm*, *nabaruttun tâgâ*, bracelets of six or seven patterns, and ear-rings of three or four kinds, for which girls in very early youth perforate their ears in eight or ten places, as also their noses in two places. By their choice of the modern ornaments they show their preference of elegance to mere weight. Brilliant pearl necklaces* of from seven to nine rows, and costly bijouteries of modern style, have superseded the old-fashioned solid gold *Baotis* and *Taurs*. A rich lady is sometimes seen with jewellery worth 15,000 to 20,000 rupees and upwards; as a matter of course, such a lady is the cynosure of all eyes, and the rest of the company move as satellites round the primary planet. Conscious of her superiority in this respect, and puffed up with vanity, she disdains to hold converse with her less fortunate sisters. She is tramping, as it were, "to the tinkling sound of the ornaments of gold and gems on her person." As the grand centre of attraction, her gait, her gestures, her movements form the subject of general criticism; and as an object of envy she continues to be talked of even after the return of the guests to their homes.

In the villages, however, silver ornaments are more in vogue than gold ones, simply because the rural population have neither the taste nor the means of the people of the city. A a rule, the Hindoos invest their savings in ornaments of gold and silver, which is turned to good account in times of need and distress. Throughout Hindoosthan, the people have so great a *penchant* for gold and silver ornaments, that not only women but men also adorn their persons with solid articles of

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* That the Hindoos have, for a long time, manifested a strong passion for ornaments, is a historical fact. Even so far back as the Mahratta dynasty, it was said of Dowlut Rao Sindhia that "his necklaces were gorgeous, consisting of many rows of pearls, as large as small marbles, strung alternately with emeralds. The pearl (*moti*) was his passion, and the necklace was constantly undergoing change whenever a finer bead was found; the title of 'Lord of a hundred Provinces' was far less esteemed by him than that of *motiwalla*, the 'Man of Pearls,' by which he was commonly designated in his camp." It was perhaps a sight of this description that led Macaulay to say—"Our plain English coats command more respect than all the gorgeous orient pearl of the East,"—indicating thereby the involuntary awe of savage for civilized life.

sterling gold. I have seen Setts (shroffs) and Malgoozars go about with ornaments of considerable value; their dress, however, is generally exceedingly tawdry, and bears no correspondence to the worth of the articles of gold they carry about. I once weighed a solid pure gold chain worn by a Sett round his waist, which the natives call *Gote;* it weighed over 4lbs., and was worth about 3,000 rupees.

In Bengal little children are seen with gold ornaments on their persons* till they are six years of age; but men are entirely free from this passion. When a male child is born to a respectable Hindoo, the heart of the mother irresistibly yearns to adorn its person with ornaments, especially at the time of *Annaprásan* (first feeding ceremony), *i.e.*, at six months of age, for a male, and seven months for a female child.

When the females are about to return home after the entertainment, it is truly a scene of "sorry to part, happy to meet again." It is seldom that such opportunities are afforded them to give free vent to their feelings, thoughts, and wishes;—a human being always feels unhappy at living in a perfectly isolated state; and this unhappiness is alike manifest in both sexes. The greater the restraint, as in the case of Hindoo ladies, the stronger the desire for social intercourse. Can a Hindoo zenana lady, with all her veiled modesty, suppress the impulse to look out through the shutters of a closed palki, with guards on both sides, in the light of day? The impulse is by no means a criminal one, but is prompted irresistibly by nature. The parting exclamation on such occasions is, "Sister, when shall I have the good fortune to see you again?" "Why, not before long," is the common reply. A few days after the feast, the families that were invited give a tangible proof of their regard for the interesting girl by making her presents of clothes and sweetmeats according to their respective circumstances, as a matter of course the nearest relatives making the richest presents.

Note B.

THE GODDESS SUBACHANI.

The following is the story of this goddess:—In a certain village there lived a poor Bráhman boy, whose poverty was well-known throughout the neighbourhood. One day a fisherwoman came to sell

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* Such as *Bore*, *Komarpátá*, *Nimfal*, *Neybuful*, *Ghungur* round the waist; *Tábij*, *Báju*, *Bálla*, *Jasam*, *Taga*, &c., on the hands; pearl and gold necklaces of various sorts, and gold mohurs or sovereigns strung together in the shape of a necklace.

some fish, on seeing which the boy began to cry for them. His mother, a poor widow, though very desirous to satisfy the craving of her son, had unfortunately no means to buy them; whereupon the fisherwoman, affected by the cries of the boy, offered to give her credit, and said she would come for the price on her way home. Meantime the mother cooked the fish; but before her son had time to eat them, the fisherwoman, according to her promise, returned for the price. The old woman being still unable to pay, the fish vendor demanded the return of the fish, which, though cooked, she was willing to take back. This being done, the boy had nevertheless the advantage of tasting the soup made of the fish, and was so much pleased with the taste of animal food that he could not resist the temptation to steal one day a *lame* duck belonging to the king, which he ate privately. Investigation being made, the theft was traced to the poor Bráhman boy, who, being summoned before the king, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to be imprisoned, at which the mother became inconsolable. Seeing her distress and despondency, the goddess Durgá, in the form of *Subachani*, appeared to her in a dream; and, giving her hopes of consolation and better luck for the future, finally advised her to perform the worship of the goddess *Subachani*. In obedience to the above injunction, she did as she was directed. Seventeen ducks made of rice-paste, sixteen with two perfect legs and one with a lame leg, formed a part of the ceremony. After the performance of the worship and the expiatory rite of *homa* (burnt offering) which expiates all sin, the holy water being sprinkled on the feathers of the stolen *lame* duck, that were concealed under the ashes, the duck that had been eaten was at once restored to life and sent back to the king's poultry-yard. The miraculous resuscitation of the duck was brought to the notice of the king, who immediately sent for the poor old woman and questioned her how the dead *lame* duck was made alive again; the old woman, trembling through fear, related all the particulars about the appearance of the goddess in a dream. The king, being satisfied as to the truth of the tale, ordered the captive boy to be released at once and brought to his presence, concluding that the goddess must have been very propitious to the old woman and her son. Consulting his ministers on the subject, he said within himself, he could not have a better match for his daughter, who was of marriageable age, than the late delinquent. So the nuptials were duly solemnized with becoming pomp, and the poor Bráhman family lived ever after in a state of great affluence and happiness. Hindoo ladies of the orthodox school learn this tale almost in the nursery, and feel a peculiar delight in reciting it on certain occasions.

Note C.

HINDOO MYTHOLOGY.

The writings of the ancient Hindoo sages, as handed down to us by history and tradition, incontestably prove that they were chiefly theists; but as their religious ideas were supremely transcendental, ill-suited to the comprehension of the great mass of the people, and consequently not adapted to bring joy, peace, and rest to the mind, their descendants learnt to modify those ideas and practically to reduce them to the level of the popular understanding. They gradually created a Trinity,—*i.e.*, the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer. But as this triad was not sufficiently attractive or intelligible to the unlettered mass, who wanted something in the shape of real, tangible personification of the deity, in place of indistinct, invisible, supernatural beings, a designing priesthood subsequently attempted to satisfy their wishes by foisting upon them a whole rabble of gods and goddesses, which are almost as innumerable as the pebbles on the sea shore. In numerical strength the Pantheon of the Hindoos far surpasses that of the Egyptians, the Greeks, or the Romans. What ancient system of mythology contained so many as 330 millions of gods and goddesses? As in mythology, so in chronology, the Hindoos stand unrivalled. Their pantheon is as capacious and extensive as their antiquity* is unfathomable and prehistoric. The origin of the Puranic mythology is to be attributed to this national predilection; and the worship of the female deities with bloody sacrifices is

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* It is curious to relate that Mr. Halhed, when he wrote his "Code of Gentoo Laws," hesitated to believe the Bible, because it was outdone in chronology by the histories of the Chinese and Hindoos. With sacred reverence he exclaims, at the close of his account of the four *yugas*: "To such antiquity the Mosaic Creation is but as yesterday, and to such ages the life of Methuselah is no more than a span?" He says in another page: "The conscientious scruples of Brydone will always be of some weight in the scale of philosophy." If the age or reign of Brahmá, *viz.*, 55,987,200,000,000 years, excited such sacred awe in the mind of this gentleman, what would have been his sensations, and how strong his faith in the holy writ of the Hindoos, if he had happened to read in the Rámáyana the account of Ráma's army, which, this holy writ says, amounted to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 soldiers or rather monkeys? Again, two thousand times the four yugas, or 8,460,000,000 years, is the age of the sage *Markanda*. What, in the name of Mr. Halhed, is the life of Methuselah to this? This unbeliever in Moses became at last, it is said, a firm believer in *Richard Brothers*."

intended to terrify the ignorant populace into superstitious beliefs still grosser than were habitual to them.

The antiquity of the Bráhmanical creed and of the religious systems incorporated into, and engrafted on it, has long been a subject of interesting inquiry. It is not my intention to go into the subject more deeply than merely to affirm that it is still a debatable point among the most distinguished Orientalists, whether or not the Egyptians and Greeks borrowed their system of mythology from that of the Hindoos, and afterwards improved on it by divesting it of the grosser excrescences. The character of the Hindoo deities is more or less puerile, impure, and ungodly, not possessing any of the cardinal virtues, such as become the living and true God. Desiring to steer clear of such deformities and impurities, the Greeks and Romans consecrated separate temples to "Virtue, Truth, Piety, Chastity, Clemency, Mercy, Justice, Faith, Hope and Liberty."

It is a remarkable fact, says Ward, that "the sceptical part of mankind have always been partial to heathenism. Voltaire, Gibbon, Hume, &c., have been often charged with a strong partiality for the Grecian and Roman idolatries; and many Europeans in India are suspected of having made large strides towards heathenism. Even Sir William Jones, whose recommendation of the Holy Scripture (found in his Bible after his death,) has been so often and so deservedly quoted, it is said, to please his Pandit, was accustomed to study the Shastras with the image of a Hindoo god placed on his table; and his fine metrical translations of idolatrous hymns are known to every lover of verse. In the same spirit, we observe, that figures and allusions to the ancient idolatries are retained in almost all modern poetical compositions and even in some Christian writings."

It has been very wisely remarked by a philosophical traveller, Dr. Clarke, that "by a proper attention to the vestiges of ancient superstition, we are sometimes enabled to refer a whole people to their original ancestors, with as much, if not more, certainty, than by observations made upon their language; because the superstition is engrafted on the stock, but the language is liable to change." Writing on the same subject, Sir William Jones remarks: "If the festivals of the old Greeks, Persians, Romans, Egyptians and Goths could be arranged with exactness in the same form with the Indian, there would be found a striking resemblance among them; and an attentive comparison of them all might throw great light on the religion, and perhaps on the history, of the primitive world."

The Egyptians described the source of the Nile as flowing from Osiris; so the Hindoos represent the holy stream of the Ganges as

flowing from the head of Iswara, which Sir William Jones so beautifully describes in his hymn to Gangá:

> "Above the reach of mortal ken,
> On blest Coelassa's top, where every stem
> Flowed with a vegetable gem,
> Mahesa stood, the dread and joy of men;
> While Párvati, to gain a boon,
> Fixed on his locks a beamy moon,
> And hid his frontal eye in jocund play,
> With reluctant sweet delay;
> All nature straight was locked in dim eclipse,
> Till Brahmins pure, with hallowed lips
> And warbled prayers restored the day,
> When Ganga from his brow, with heavenly fingers free,
> Sprang radiant, and descending, graced the caverns of the west."

For composing such fine metrical translations of idolatrous hymns. Mr. Foster finds fault with the conduct of Sir William Jones. He writes: "I could not help feeling a degree of regret in reading lately the Memoirs of the admirable and estimable Sir William Jones. Some of his researches in Asia have no doubt incidentally served the cause of religion; but did he think the least possible direct service had been rendered to Christianity, that his accomplished mind was left at leisure for hymns to the Hindoo gods? Was not this a violation even of neutrality, and an offence, not only against the gospel, but against theism itself? I know what may be said about personification, license of poetry, and so on, but should not a worshipper of God hold himself under a solemn obligation to abjure all tolerance of even poetical figures that can seriously seem, in any way whatever, to recognize the pagan divinities or abominations, as the prophets of Jehova would have called them? What would Elijah have said to such an employment of talents? It would have availed little to have told him, that these divinities were only personifications (with their appropriate representative idols) of objects in nature, of elements, or of abstractions. He would have sternly replied—'And was not Baal, whose prophets I destroyed, the same?'"

Dr. Stiles, President of Yale College in North America, was so highly impressed with the amazing antiquity of the Hindoo Shastras that he wrote to Sir William Jones, asking him to make a search among the Hindoos for the Adamic Books. Had he not been a sincere Christian, he would have asked Sir William to send him a translation of a book written some two or three millions of years ago.

General Stewart, who lived in Wood Street, Calcutta, was said to have made a large collection of Hindoo idols, which he arranged in the portico of his house. He was so fond of them that, it was said, a Bráhman was engaged to perform the daily worship, while he himself led the life of a Hindoo *Rishi*, or saint, inasmuch as he totally abstained from the use of either wine or meat.

Such instances of partiality on the part of enlightened Christians towards heathenism, we do not see in the present day. In the early times of the British settlement in India, there was a strong mania for exploring the untrodden field of Bráhmanical learning, and the unfathomable antiquity in which it was imbedded. The philosophical theories of the *Munis* and *Rishis*, their sublime conceptions concerning the origin of the world and the unity of God, their utter indifference to worldly concerns and sensual gratifications, their living in sequestered *Ashrams*, the practice of religious austerities, the subjugation of passions, and above all, their pure, devotional spirit, lent an enchantment to their teachings, which was, in the highest degree, fascinating. It was not an ordinary phenomenon in the annals of the human intellect that Europeans, possessing all the advantages of modern civilization, should go so far as to entertain a sort of religious veneration for a system of polytheism, which even the natives of the country now-a-days denounce as puerile and absurd. Deeper researches have, however, subsequently dissipated the delusion, and thrown on the subject a great body of light, which the progress of Western knowledge is daily increasing.

Note D.

THE BA'MA'CHA'RI, FOLLOWERS OF KALI.

In some parts of Bengal and Assam, there still exists a sect of Hindoos, known by the name of *Bâmácháris*, or the followers of the female energy, who practise a series of *Purnabishaka*, orgies in the name of this celestial goddess, which are nothing less than abominable. The following is a rough programme of the rite: The Bráhman who is to perform the ceremony sits upon a sham image of the goddess in a private room, having beside him at the same time a quantity of flowers, red sandal paste, holy water, copper pans, plantain and other fruits, green plantain leaves, parched peas, cooked fish and flesh, and a certain quantity of spirituous liquor. When night approaches he takes the disciple who is to be initiated into the room,

with nine females and nine males of different castes, with one female for himself and another for the disciple, and makes them all sit down on the floor. Taking up a small copper pan and a little of the holy water, he sprinkles it on all present, and then proceeds with closed eyes to repeat a solemn incantation to the following effect: "O goddess, descend and vouchsafe thy blessings to Horomohan (the name of the devotee) who has hitherto groped in the dark, not knowing what thou art; these offerings are all at thy service;" saying this, he whispers in his ear the *bij-mantra*. From that time the goddess becomes his guardian deity. The Bráhman Guru then goes through divers other formulas, pausing for a while to serve and distribute liquor in a human skull or cocoanut shell to all the devotees, himself setting the example first. He next desires the females to lay aside their clothes, and bids his new disciple adore them as the living personifications of the goddess. Eating and drinking now go on freely, the males taking what is left by the females. Towards the close of the ceremony, the disciple, baptised in liquor, makes presents of clothes and money to the priest and all the men and women present. It is easy to conceive what sort of devotional spirit is evoked by the performance of these abominable orgies. Happily for the interests of morality in this country, the sect is nearly extinct, except in the most obscure parts of Assam and Bengal.

GLOSSARY.



Áchmany jalpán	... Sweetmeats prepared with flour and sugar, and fried in ghee, which are considered as contaminated by the orthodox Bráhmans if touched by a *Sudra*.
Adhibássi ...	... Present of sundry articles, see p. 53. Preliminary rite in meritorious acts.
Adhyapaks ...	... Professors of Sanskrit.
Ádigangá ...	... Original sacred stream of the Ganges. It is now known as Tolly's Nullah.
Ágmaney ...	... Songs expressive of joy on the near approach of Durgá-pujá.
Agrajanma	... First born.
Áhibarrabhát	... Dinner given to bride or bridegroom in honor of approaching wedding; also entertainment given to friends and relations on that occasion.
Akhanda ...	... Means whole, uncut. *Sáris*, female's garment, are generally woven by pairs, to be divided into two at the time of use. But *sáris* for ceremonial use are woven single, and consequently they need not the service of a knife. These latter are called *akhunda sáris*.
Álbolá ...	... Smoking apparatus.
Álkhellá ...	... A garment copied from the Mahomedans.
Álpaná ...	... Painting with rice paste.

Áltá ... ... Cotton saturated with lac, for painting the edges of the feet and toes of Hindoo women. It is used both for beautifying and preserving their bare feet from corroding.

Amábashyá ... The dark night.

Ánanda Náru ... *Ánanda* means rejoicing; and *Náru*, a ball. A kind of home-made sweetmeat prepared at times of domestic rejoicings.

Anchal ... ... The end of female's garment which hangs over her shoulder.

Andarmahal ... Female apartment; zenana.

Anna ... ... Boiled rice.

Annaprásan ... First feeding ceremony, which takes place generally on the sixth lunar month for the male, and seventh for the female child.

Antarjalí ... ... Few minutes before death, the dying person, especially if old, is taken to the edge of the river, and placed there under water knee-deep, his or her toes touching the earth under water, and the body resting on the lap of some of the attendants, who are generally relatives, and these latter at the same time keep reciting the name of the guardian deity of the Káli Yuga, and put drops of holy river water in the mouth of the dying person, who is so kept there till the last spark of life goes out. This process is called *Antarjalí.* But unhappily this simple and comparatively inoffensive practice is so often abused by the unscrupulous and designing men to gain their end, as is described in text, p. 259, that it is justly considered a cruel and heartless practice.

Ántmora ... ... *Helicteres isora.*

Aowni Báwni tin din pitta bhát khdwni. } Cake festival has arrived, let us enjoy for three days, eating cakes, rice, &c.

Apar-pakshya ... The fortnight immediately preceding the fortnight in which Durgá-pujá takes place.

Apar-pakshya tarpan Oblation of water offered to departed ancestors during the fortnight immediately preceding the fortnight in which Durgá-pujá takes place.

Árghi ... ... Consecrated articles, p. 71 note.

Áripáto ... ... Eavesdropping.

Áshrams ... ... Habitations of sages.

Ássár ... ... Third month of the Hindoo calendar (July—August).

Ássirbád ... .. Blessing.

Asúchi ... ... Impure state. In case of death or birth in a family, one month in the case of *Sudras*, and ten days in the case of Bráhmans, is observed as impure, during which period the whole family is prohibited from taking part in any religious ceremony—even giving alms to the poor, paying obeisance to seniors, or greeting equals are also forbidden.

Aswatha ... ... *Ficus religiosa* (Pipal).

Átab chál ... ... Rice husked by drying in the sun.

Átab rice ... ... Table rice.

Átcowray ... ... A ceremony which takes place on the night of the 8th day from the birth of a child.

Alterdán ... ... A cup for keeping attar or otto of roses.

Ayos ... ... Bridesmaids. Unlike Christians, Hindoo bridegrooms have no sponsors, bridesmaids (*ayos*) being engaged on both sides. Hindoo bridesmaids must be married women whose husbands are alive. Their number is generally five on each side; but this might be varied into more or less according to circumstances or convenience, the odd number always being observed.

Aystri ... ... Opposed to widow, *i.e.*, one whose husband is alive.

Aystrihood ... Opposed to widowhood; state of husband being alive.

Aystrism ... ... Opposed to widowhood; state of husband being alive.

Áyurveda ... ... A Sanskrit work on medicine.

W

Bábá ... ... Papa; father; a term of endearment when addressed to a boy.

Bábá Thákur ... Another form of *Shiva;* god of hobgoblins.

Báchhá ... ... A term of endearment, used in addressing children.

Bael ... ... A hard shelled fruit.

Bágdi ... ... A low caste Hindoo (labouring class).

Baitak-kháná ... Sitting or receiving room.

Baitarani ... ... A rite performed generally at point of death, like the extreme unction of the Romish Church; for detail see p. 256, note.

Bakrede ... ... A Mahomedan festival, when goats are slaughtered in large numbers.

Bálá ... ... Bangle.

Bale buto sári ... Fancy *Sári*, with rows of *Bale* flowers, woven.

Bámáchári ... A sect, followers of *Káli.*

Bámun ... ... Corruption of *Bráhman.*

Bápu ... ... Same as *Bábá*, a term of endearment applicable to boys only.

Bar konay bachay tkákug ... A phrase indicative of blessing used by beggars and others who come on the morning after marriage, and before the bridegroom's departure, expecting to get something from bridegroom's father. It means—May the bridegroom and bride live long.

Barábharan ... Presents of household articles given by bride's father to bridegroom.

Barandálá ... A winnowing fan (*Kulo*) with sundry articles emblematic of prosperity, plenty, &c. It is placed in front of bride or bridegroom on their reception and departure.

Barfi ... ... A kind of sweetmeat.

Bargis ... ... Mahratta marauders.

Barjátras ... ... Bridegroom's friends and relations who accompany the marriage procession.

Barra Bau ... Elder daughter-in-law.

Bársik ... ... Annuity given to Bráhmans.

Bárwári-pujá ... A pujá (worship) mainly got up and supported by aid of subscription and fees levied on marriage festivals on bridegroom. Shop-keepers and dealers in country-produce are the chief patrons of this pujá. They raise a fund by levying small impost on purchasers on all transactions. By this means, sometimes, in favourable quarters, a large fund is raised and wasted, which, had it been properly applied, might have done immense good to the country.

Básarghar ... Sleeping room on marriage night for the happy pair.

Bássanti ... Yellowish; this color is emblematic of Spring, and is used by the gay and sprightly on the advent of that season.

Bássi-Bibáha ... Literally stale marriage; ceremonials which take place on the morning following the marriage night.

Bátá ... A tray for betel-nut.

Bata ... *Ficus Indica.*

Bátásá ... Native sweetmeat.

Báti .. ... A cup.

Bau ... Daughter-in-law; sometimes, amongst lower classes, it means wife.

Báuti ... Old-fashioned bracelet, a costly jewel.

Bayádab ... Want of good breeding.

Baykanta ... Heaven, Paradise.

Bayri ... Kind of tongs.

Belbaran ... A ceremonial rite of welcome.

Bhabáni .. ... Another name of *Káli.*

Bhabitarbi... ... Fate; dispensation of Providence.

Bhádrabau ... Sister-in-law (younger brother's wife).

Bhája ... Sister-in-law (brother's wife).

Bhájá shád ... Parched peas, &c., given to women *enceinte* on the seventh month of their pregnancy.

Bhárey má Bhabáni. An expression used by drunkards, meaning "Mother *Káli* is within the bottle."

Bhásán ... ... Immersion of image in river after being worshipped.
Bhásur ... ... Brother-in-law (husband's elder brother).
Bháts ... .. Professional genealogists.
Bhavánando ... A popular ballad singer.
Bhayto ... ... Literally rice-fed; it means weak-stomached.
Bhrátridvitiya .. A festival in which sisters entertain brothers.
Bhudeva ... ... God of earth.
Bhumi-sanya ... Wanting land.
Bhupadá ... ... A girl's name.
Bichuti ... ... A stinging plant (*Fragia involucrata*).
Bidai or *Bidáya* ... Literally means farewell; also means farewell gift.
Biddhi shrád ... Ancestor worship on special occasions.
Biddya Sunder ... A popular play.
Bidhabá ... ... Widow.
Bidhátá ... ... God of Fate.
Bidhátá Purush ... God of Fate.
Bij mantra ... Literally *bij* means seed; *mantra*, incantation or formulary. Certain formula a spiritual guide (*guru*) imparts to his pupil, which is to be his daily prayer, but religiously forbidden to repeat to the hearing of any one else. The ceremony of imparting *Bij mantra* is like the christening of the followers of Jesus.
Bijayá ... ... Day for immersion of Durgá in river; or the fourth day of her pujá.
Billapatro or *Billow*... Leaf of *Bael* tree, a tree considered holy by the Hindoos.
Biraha ... ... Songs expressive of pangs of separation.
Bisveswar ... ... The presiding god of Benares.
Bodan Ghar ... Place where preliminary rites are performed.
Boidya ... ... A Sanskrit work on medicine.
Bore ... ... A jewel worn round the waist, by juvenals only.
Bowbhát ... ... Bridal dinner.
Boyra ... ... A kind of nut, *Terminalia belerica*.
Brahmachári ... Religious mendicant.

Bráhman ...	... Sacerdotal class.
Brahmatras	... Rent-free grants of land to Bráhmans.
Brata ...	... Vow.
Brisakát ...	... A painted log of wood, with an ox carved on its top. It is necessary for higher grade *shráddhas*.
Brithá ...	... Literally vain; unconsecrated.
Bróhmá ...	... The creator, first person of the Hindoo Trinity.
Cassay ...	... A kind of grass.
Chádar ...	... Sheet for covering the body. A loose vesture.
Chál ...	... Literally roof of thatched huts; colloquially uncooked rice; here (p. 100) it means the semi-circular frame over the images.
Chámár ...	... Fan made of tails of Thibet cows.
Chánakya sloka	... Verses compiled by Pandit Chánakya.
Chandan ...	... Sandal paste.
Chandi or *Chandi-puthi*	A book on Goddess Durgá; also another name of Durgá.
Chandra ...	... Moon.
Chandra-puli	... A sweetmeat.
Chápkán ...	... A garment.
Chappatee	... A kind of cake.
Charak-pujá	... Hook-swinging festival.
Charak-Swasru	... A Sanskrit work on medicine.
Chárdls ...	... Low caste Hindoos, who are considered very impure.
Charká ...	... Cotton-spinning apparatus.
Chárpoy ...	... A string bed, used for carrying the dead.
Cháru	... Table rice boiled with milk and sugar on ceremonial occasions, and consecrated.
Chatuspáti	... School kept by learned Bráhmans for teaching Sanskrit.
Chhádlahtaláh	... A temporary shed, where certain portion of marriage ceremony takes place.
Chháná ...	... Coagulated milk; native cheese.
Chhátu ...	... Gram parched and powdered.
Chhillam ...	... It is a part and parcel of the smoking apparatus of the Hindoos, generally made of earth.

Chhoto Bau	... Younger daughter-in-law.
Chhoto-ma	... Literally younger mother.
Chick ...	... A gold jewel (chain-like) for neck.
Chinirmurki	... Parched rice coated with syrup.
Chirá ...	... Parched rice (flattened).
Chirá-vájá	... The above re-parched.
Chogá ...	... Overcoat.
Cowries ...	... Shells current for small payments, fractional part of a pie.
Crore ...	... Equal to ten millions.
Dábar ...	... A vessel for various use.
Dagdhá ...	... Literally burnt.
Daibajna ...	... Astrologer.
Dák ...	... Tinsel-ware.
Daksha Yajna	... A popular play.
Dakshiná ...	... Fees to officiating priests; also small amounts given to priest class after entertaining them.
Dakshinánto	... Last rite in pujá ceremonies.
Dál ...	... Peas; split peas boiled.
Dál Vát ...	... Chief and common food of the Hindoos.
Dalapati ...	... Head of a caste-party.
Dalls ...	... Parties.
Dán ...	... Gift.
Dánságar ...	... Literally "Ocean of gifts." It is a mode of *shráddha*, very expensive, intended for millionaires.
Dasaratha	... King of Oudh, father of Ráma Chandra.
Dási ...	... A maidservant.
Dátá ...	... Charitable person.
Dayur ...	... Brother-in-law (husband's younger brother).
Debatras ..	... Rent-free grants of land in name of some god or goddess.
Debipakshya	... The fortnight in which Durgá-pujá takes place.
Debtá ...	... God.
Dewá-thowá	... Literally giving and taking presents, &c.

Dewáli ... ... Kali-pujá night. A festival observed by illumination and fireworks.

Dhák ... ... A big drum.

Dhán ... ... Paddy.

Dharmo Shabhá ... Assembly for discussion of religious subjects.

Dhole ... ... A small drum.

Dhúti ... ... Lower garment for male,—*i.e.*, sheet of cloth worn round the loins.

Dipay ... ... A betel-box.

Dobjá ... ... A loose vesture.

Dole or *Dole Játtrá*... Commonly known as *Holi*-festival.

Dome ... ... A low caste Hindoo (street-sweeper, worker on bamboo-barks).

Dome Saraya ... What the *Domes* supply, *i.e.*, baskets, &c.

Durgá ... ... A goddess with ten hands, whose worship is performed, with great pomp, in Lower Bengal, in Sept.—October.

Durgátsab ... Durgá-pujá.

Durvá ... ... Grass.

Dvija ... ... Twice-born or regenerated. Bráhmans are called twice-born: their first birth being their natural birth; and second, the metaphorical, when they are invested with the sacred thread (regenerated). This term is also applicable to birds, because they are supposed to be born once when eggs are laid; and again when eggs are hatched.

Eed ... ... A Mahomedan festival.

Ekádashí ... ... Eleventh day of new moon as well as the same day after full-moon (days of close fast for widows).

Ekláí ... ... See *Urani*.

Fakirs ... ... Mahomedan mendicants.

Fulsharjya ... Literally bed of flower. It is the third night after marriage, which is a night of festivity in bridegroom's house, and passed in all manner of jollities. Also it means the presents given by girl's father on that occasion.

Ganesha ... ... An elephant-headed god, son of *Shiva* and *Durgá*.

Gántchhórá ... Bridal knot.

Garibparbar ... A flattering term used by up-countrymen. Literally means Supporter of the poor.

Guru ... ... Cow; figuratively illiterate.

Gáru ... ... Water-pot with a tube attached, as a teapot has.

Gátra-haridrá ... Ceremony of besmearing the body of bride or bridegroom with turmeric.

Gauri ... ... Maiden name of *Durgá*.

Gáyatri ... ... Divine prayer enjoined for the Bráhmans.

Gayláśh ... ... Glass, drinking vessel.

Ghará ... ... Large water-pot.

Gharbasáth ... Ceremony of visiting father-in-law's house three times within the week after marriage.

Ghar-Jamaye ... Son-in-law who lives with, and is solely dependent on, father-in-law.

Ghata ... ... Earthen water-pot used in religious ceremonies.

Ghutak ... ... Go-between; professional match-makers.

Ghungur ... ... A jewel for juvenals, which makes jingling sounds on least motion, worn round the waist or ankle.

Ghunsi ... .. String worn round the loins.

Gilay ... ... An unedible fruit.

Ginní ... ... Female head of a family.

Giri Bálá ... ... Name of a girl.

Gokhadák ... ... Beaf-eaters.

Golappáss ... A vessel for keeping rose-water.

Golemal ... ... Confusion.

Gopinís ... ... Milkmaids, *Krishna's* sweethearts.

Gote ... ... Waist chain.

Goylas ... ... Milkmen.

Grahajág ... ... Religious atonement.

Grámvati ... ... Stop-money given to urchins of the neighbourhood to prevent the nuisance caused to the bridegroom on his way to the bride's house, by pelting him with stones and other things—a privilege sanctioned by

custom. This bears some affinity to the European practice of casting old boots and shoes at the wedded pair by the relations on their making exit from the house.

Guru ... ... Literally senior, master; spiritual guide.

Gurumohásay ... Pedagogue, village school-master.

Gyásur ... ... The presiding god of Gya.

Habbishee ... ... A dish for sages in days of yore; a pure food according to Hindoo notion.

Hákim ... ... Mahomedan physician; also a judicial officer.

Handi ... ... Earthen pot for cooking purposes.

Hara ... ... Another name of *Shiva*.

Hari ... ... Another name of *Krishna*.

Haribole ... ... Unlike one of the ten commandments in the Bible, "Thou shalt not take the name of the lord thy God in vain"—Hindoo shastra enjoins to repeat the name of god as often as possible. Consequently some of the bigotted *Vaishnavites* day and night repeat the name and turn their beads. *Hari* is another name of *Vishnu*, the second person of the Hindoo trinity, and *bole* means *sound*. Consequently it is considered meritorious to repeat the word "Haribole," as often as possible, during the funeral, in order to keep off all worldly considerations, at least for the time.

Hárikát ... ... Sacrificial post; it is like a two-pronged fork.

Háris ... ... Mehters.

Haru Thakur ... A popular ballad singer.

Hát-bázár ... ... Purchases; marketing.

Háthá ... ... A ladle.

Háthchhari ... A method of discipline to enure early attendance in vogue in village schools.

Háyi-ámlá ... Refuse of spices ground down into a paste. Two women, whose husbands are alive, and who are known to be uncommonly doated upon by their husbands, are selected from

amongst the friends and relations of the bride, who, sitted opposite of each other, face to face, grind the above ingredients, at the same time keep a small quantity of honey in their mouth. This paste, thus prepared, is supposed to possess some hidden charms. When the marriage ceremony is going on in the courtyard of the zenana, the female relatives and friends of the bride throw lumps of this paste at the bride, from a respectable distance, as an inevitable means of winning the bridegroom over to the bride, and bringing him (the bridegroom) under the all-powerful influence of petticoat government. Sometimes rice coated with treacle is used instead.

Homa ... ... Burnt offering.

Hukká ... ... Smoking apparatus.

Indra ... ... King of heaven.

Jáchi-jáchi ... Coming, coming.

Jagannátha .. The presiding god of Pooree in Orissa.

Jagat ... ... World

Jagatdhátri ... A goddess; literally means Mother of the world.

Jai ... ... Victory.

Jai Káli Kalkátá-wáli An exclamation generally used by illiterate and low people; literally means Victory to *Káli*, the presiding goddess of Calcutta.

Jalpán ... ... Sweetmeats in general.

Jámá ... ... Waistcoat.

Jámái Shasthi ... A festival; day for entertaining sons-in-law.

Janma Ayestri ... Life long ayestrihood,—*i. e.*, never to be a widow.

Janmáshtami ... A festival (*Krishná's* birthday).

Jarawyá ... ... Jewels set with precious stones.

Jasam ... ... A gold jewel for arm.

Jasodá ... ... A milkmaid, the foster mother of *Krishna*.

Játtrá ... ... Departure; also Dramatic performance.

Jatuk ... ... Literally small money-presents given to bride and bridegroom by friends and relations on the consummation of marriage, and to child on its first feeding ceremony.

Jhál ... ... Literally hot; pungent; preparation of spices, generally given to mothers at childbirth as a stimulant acting as a preventive against cold.

Jhí ... ... Maidservant; literally Daughter.

Jhulán ... ... The swinging festival dedicated to *Krishna.*

Kabiráj ... ... Hindoo physician.

Kachuri ... ... A kind of cake.

Káhans ... ... Quantity numbering 1280. A káhan of cowries (shells) is now worth four annas.

Kâjalnáthá ... A collyrium case.

Kalá Bau ... ... Ganesha's wife.

Kalá-káta Amábashya The dark night immediately before the Durgá-pujá, so called because the gardeners on that day collect all the plantains they can for sale during the festival.

Káli ... ... A goddess with four hands and dark-complexioned, whom thieves and dacoits worship before setting out on their nefarious purposes.

Káli ghát ... ... A holy place in the southern suburbs of Calcutta, where stands the shrine of *Káli* from time out of mind, after which, it is said, Calcutta is named.

Káli maikey jay ... Victory to mother Kali.

Kali-yuga ... ... One of the four great periods of the world; it is the present or iron age.

Kalie ... ... A kind of pulse.

Kállyá ... ... A Mahomedan dish.

Kalpa ... ... Ceremonial rite prefatory to pujá proper.

Kámdhenu ... ... A cow which gives milk at all times of the year; also an imaginary heavenly cow.

Kanakánjuli ... A ceremony performed immediately before a bridegroom leaves his house to join marriage procession; also in *pujá* ceremonies before *Vásán*, or immersion.

Kânchá shád ... See note to p. 306.

Kánsári ... Brazier.

Kaowra árak ... A kind of scent; decoction of the *Káyá* flower.

Kartá ... Lord; owner; male head of a family.

Karatál ... Cymbal; a kind of circular metallic musical instrument.

Kártik ... A god, who is a celebite; therefore he is considered as a child-god and worshipped by those who are not blessed with children.

Kásar ... A circular metallic instrument producing, when struck, a loud and harsh sound.

Kashye or kasaye .. Butcher.

Kátá ... A land-measure: one-sixteenth of a biga = 720 sqr. feet.

Kátyayana... .. A sage.

Kausalya ... One of the wives of Dasaratha, and mother of Ráma Chandra.

Káyastha or *káyasto*... Writer caste.

Kerâni ... Writer.

Khá-khá ... A cant term meaning lonely.

Khai ... Parched rice.

Khánsámá ... A valet.

Khupparer Sará ... Sacrificial vessel (earthen) for holding blood of the immolated animal.

Khárá ... Sacrificial sword.

Khari ... Chalk.

Khasári-dál ... A kind of inferior pulse.

Khásgayláp ... Staff encased in cloth, which accompany marriage processions.

Khásgaylápwállás ... Those that carry *Khásgayláp* in marriage processions.

Khayur ... Obscene songs.

Khichri ... Hodge-podge; a dish of mixture of dál and rice.

Khirarchhách ... A sweetmeat.
Khodáband ... A flattering term used by up-countrymen, equivalent to "Your Worship."
Khokâ ... ... Baby (male).
Khole ... ... A musical instrument like a drum, with both ends tapering to a smaller circumference than the centre.
Khopá ... ... Hair gathered and wound round on back of head of Hindoo women.
Kinkhab ... ... Gold embroidered cloth.
Kittanis ... ... Band of singers and musicians with a head female singer.
Kobi ... ... Popular ballad.
Kobiwállá ... ... Popular ballad singers.
Komarpáttá ... A jewel for juvenals, worn round the waist.
Koptá ... ... A Mahomedan dish.
Koray-ráur ... A virgin widow.
Krishna ... ... An incarnation of *Vishnu*.
Kula-marjádá ... Honorarium given to one higher in social scale.
Kulins ... ... One higher in social scale.
Kulo .. ... Winnowing fan, made of bamboo-bark.
Kumár ... ... Potter.
Kumár Sarya ... Pottery.
Kumáris ... ... Virgins.
Kunti ... ... Mother of the five *Pandavas*, the well-known heroes of the great epic poem Mahábharat.
Kurmá ... ... A Mahomedan dish.
Kusásans ... ... Grass seats used on ceremonial occasions.

Laganshá ... ... Marriage season.
Lajjá-bastra ... A piece of cloth for covering the bride and bridegroom, so as to screen them from public gaze during certain portion of marriage ceremony: thus initiating her into the seclusion of zenana.
Lakshmi ... ... A popular ballad singer.
Lakshmi ... ... Goddess of wealth and prosperity.
Lamb-rass... ... One of the 12 signs of the zodiac; *Aries*, the ram.

Lanká ... ... An imaginary island of gold, egg-shaped, supposed to be the present Island of Ceylon.
Lion-rass ... ... One of the 12 signs of the zodiac; *Leo*, the lion.
Lowkatá ... ... Social custom.
Luchi ... ... A kind of cake, like *chuppatees*, but fried in [ghee.

Má ... ... Mother.
Madhusudan ... Another name of *Krishna*.
Máduli ... ... A small casket made of gold, silver, or copper, used as a receptacle for charms, &c.
Mágo má .. ... An exclamation of surprize generally used by women, equivalent to Oh mother!
Mahá Astami ... The second day of the Durgá-pujá.
Mahábhárat ... One of the two great epic poems of the Hindoos.
Mahádeva ... Another name of *Shiva*.
Mahálayá ... ... It is like the All Souls' day of the Romish Church.
Mahámáyár Bázár ... A cant phrase, meaning—It is the day and place for amusement and revelry.
Mahápáyá.. ... A covered palanquin.
Makar Sankránti ... The second day of the Cake Festival.
Málá ... ... String of beads; also garland (of flowers).
Málá-chandan ... Sandaled garlands.
Mall ... ... Anklet.
Mantra ... ... Incantation; certain formulas of words.
Manu ... ... The great Hindoo lawgiver.
Mánvanjan ... A popular play.
Márkando ... ... Name of a sage.
Maruiporá Bráhman. The priest who officiates at the time of cremation of the dead.
Má Shasthi ... A goddess (patron deity of children).
Maulik ... ... One lower in social scale to the *kulins*.
Maurpankhi ... A boat fitted as a stage for musical choir; it is so called from its resembling a *Maur*, or peacock.
Mayná ... ... A talkative bird.
Melá ... ... Fair, exhibition.

Methái or *Mitái* ... A kind of sweetmeat.
Methránis ... ... Women of the sweeper caste.
Mlechas ... ... Literally unclean; filthy; a term of contempt used by the Hindoos towards Mahomedans, Christians, &c., who are not clean according to Hindoo idea of cleanliness and purity.
Mondá ... ... A kind of sweetmeat.
Moong-dál... ... A kind of pulse.
Moonglivár ... Earthen-pot. It is one of the articles which compose *Barandálá.*
Moori ... ... Literally head; a victim.
Moti ... ... Pearl.
Munis ... .. Sages or saints.
Murdafaráshes ... Undertakers.
Murkhi ... ... Parched rice coated with treacle.

Nabami rátri ... Ninth night from new or full moon. Also night of the third day of Durgá-puja.
Nabarattan Tágá ... A gold jewel for arm.
Nágárá ... ... Big drum.
Nágás ... ... Hindoo mendicants.
Nahabat ... ... A concert of nine musical instruments; it is generally played from a lofty place, for which a temporary stage or tower of bamboo is made, which is also sometimes called Nahabat, but properly Nahabat-khana.
Naibiddhi ... ... Offerings to gods or goddesses.
Nal or *nul* ... Pipe.
Nanad ... ... Sister-in-law (husband's sister).
Nanadkhámee ... Money-present given by bride's father to her husband's sister.
Nánní-muka ... Ancestor-worship.
Narun ... ... Nail-cutter.
Nátch ... ... Dancing.
Neybuful ... ... A jewel for juvenals worn round the waist.
Nidan ... ... A Sanskrit work on medicine.
Nim ... ... A sacred tree.
Nimfal ... ... A jewel for juvenals worn round the waist.

Nindá ... ... Finding fault with.
Niranjan ... ... Immersion of image in river after being worshipped.
Nishi ... ... Midnight.
Nitái ... ... A popular ballad singer.
Niumbhanga ... Literally means breaking of rules. The day from which the restrictions imposed during mourning are removed.

Pádris ... ... Missionaries.
Págri ... ... Head dress, a turban.
Páji ... ... Mean, wicked.
Páká deykhá ... Final marriage-settlement.
Páká jalpán ... Feast given of sweetmeats only.
Pálki ... ... A kind of conveyance carried by four bearers on their shoulders.
Pall-ball ... ... A vegetable much liked by the Hindoos.
Pán ... ... Betel.
Pánchâli ... ... Musical drama. Popular ballads.
Panchámrita ... See note, p. 306.
Pán-dán ... ... A tray for betel-nuts, &c.
Pápar ... ... A kind of cake.
Parakál ... ... Next world.
Párbans ... ... Festivals.
Pashminá ... ... Woollen.
Pátsálá ... ... Village school.
Pattra ... ... Literally leaf, letter; marriage agreement.
Páttra-darshani ... Present of money given to would-be bridegrooms.
Paus ... ... Ninth month of the Hindoo calendar: December-January.
Paus Sankránt ... Last day of the month of *Paus*; the second day of Cake Festival.
Paykáti ... ... Faggots.
Phág ... ... A kind of red powder used in *Holi* festival.
Pikdán ... ... A spittoon.
Pinda ... ... Funeral cake.
Piráli ... ... An outcast.
Piray ... ... Wooden seat.

Pitáli ... ... Rice-paste.
Pitjhápá ... ... A jewel for the back.
Poita ... ... Sacred thread of the sacerdotal class.
Poláo ... ... A Mahomedan dish, now become fashionable amongst Hindoos.
Prajápati ... ... God of Fate, another name of *Brahmá*, the creator, the first person of the Hindoo Trinity.
Prán ... ... Literally life; term of endearment used in addressing sweethearts.
Pratimás ... ... Images of gods.
Pratipada ... ... First day after new and full moon.
Pravakar ... ... Literally sun.
Práyischittra ... Atonement.
Pronám ... ... Bow, a mode of saluting the senior in vogue amongst the natives of Bengal.
Pronámi ... ... Small amounts of money offered to gods and goddesses at the time of making obeisance to them.
Pujá ... ... Worship.
Purnabishaka ... Orgies.
Purohit ... ... Literally well-wisher of a family; family priest.
Puspánjali ... ... Offering of flowers.
Puthi ... ... Manuscript sacred books.
Rádhá ... ... *Krishna's* principal sweetheart, a milkmaid. *Rádhá* and *Krishna* are model lovers.
Ráj ... ... Reign, kingdom.
Rájá ... ... King.
Rákshasis ... ... Female monsters, or cannibals.
Ráma Chandra ... The deified hero of the *Rámáyana*.
Rámáyana ... One of the two great epic poems of the Hindoos.
Rámprosád ... A popular ballad singer.
Rár-háthá ... ... Widow-handed, *i.e.*, without any jewels on.
Rás ... ... A festival of *Krishna*.
Rasagolla ... ... A kind of sweetmeat.
Rávana ... ... The monster king of Ceylon, with ten heads and twenty hands, the principal hero of the *Rámáyana*.

Raykáb ... ... A small plate (dish).
Rayowbháts ... A class of people who are neither beggars nor religious mendicants, of decent appearance, and in social scale below the priest class, whose precarious living is the occasional charity given them during the *shráddha* and marriage ceremonies. Consequently, they are of all the most troublesome and discontented people, and, like Oliver, always ask for more.
Raywos ... ... See *Rayobháts.*
Rek ... ... A small basket for measuring grain, corns, &c.
Rishis ... ... Saints, sages.

Sabhá ... ... Assembly.
Sadhavás ... ... Those whose husbands are alive.
Sádhvi ... ... Virtuous woman.
Safeydá ... ... Pounded rice.
Sáheb loques ... Europeans.
Sajuti or *Sanjuti Brata* A religious vow, performed by unmarried girls only.
Sakhisangbád ... Songs expressive of news conveyed to *Krishna* by *Brinda* (one of *Krishna's* sweethearts) of the pangs of separation felt by the milkmaids.
Sáktas ... ... A religious sect, followers of *Káli,* who can offer animal sacrifice and eat animal food.
Sakti ... ... Literally strength. Another name of *Káli* (wife of *Shiva*).
Sálgrám Silá ... A household god.
Sáli ... .. Sister-in-law (wife's sister).
Samájik ... ... Social presents.
Sánái ... ... Flute.
Sandes ... ... A kind of sweetmeat.
Sandhya ... ... Literally evening; daily evening service.
Sang ... ... Carricature representation
Sankha-dhani ... Sound of conch.
Saptami ... ... Literally seventh day of the new and full moon; first day of Durga-pujá.

Sará ... ... Earthen vessel, covering for *Handi.*
Sára Sangraha ... An abridged Sanskrit work on medicine.
Saraswáti ... ... Goddess of speech and learning.
Sári ... ... Is a piece of cloth, 5 yards long, by 1¼ yards wide, for adult, with borders, the ground generally being white, but sometimes colored, striped, checked, or otherwise. It is the only garment of Hindoo female, which covers her from head to foot,—that is, one-half is worn round the loins and the other half serves the purpose of covering the upper part of her body, as well as veiling the head. Widows are religiously prohibited from wearing bordered or colored *sáris.* They use a piece of cloth of same length and breadth, but always white. However, they are allowed to use silk *saries* (of course unbordered and uncolored as above) on festive occasions.
Sarjya-toláni .. Honorarium paid to bridesmaids for removing the temporary bed set up for bride and bridegroom on the night of marriage,—an office which they are privileged to perform.
Sarvuswn ... ... A Sanskrit work on medicine.
Sastyán ... ... Religious atonement; a service like the *mass* of the Romish Church.
Sati ... ... Literally chaste; a name of Durgá; immolation of Hindoo widow.
Satin ... ... Rival wife.
Saudámini ... ... Name of a girl; literally lightning, to which she is likened.
Sawsur ... ... Father-in-law.
Sáwsuri ... ... Mother-in-law.
Seyteyrá-pujá ... Worship of the God of Fate on the 6th night after birth of a child.
Shád ... ... Means "desire." Here (pp. 306-7) it means a ceremony and entertainment given on the 5th, 7th, and 9th month of pregnancy. On which occasion all desirable (palatable)

eatables are given to pregnant women, as well as to the female guests invited. This ceremony originated with the idea that this is the most critical time for a woman, and she might not survive the (sweet) pain of childbirth; so the relations and friends become anxious for her, and feed, clothe, and entertain her in the best way they can.

Shandhyá-pujá ... Special pujá on the second day of the Durgá-puja festival.

Sharat-Shashi ... Literally moon of a particular season, when she shines brighter than ever. Here it is the name of a girl, who is likened to the moon of that season.

Shástra ... ... Sacred book.

Shayámá ... ... Another name of the goddess *Káli.*

Shiddi ... ... Hemp.

Shiva ... ... The destroyer, third person of the Hindoo Trinity.

Shrád or *Shráddha* ... Funeral ceremony.

Shobeborát ... A Mahomedan festival.

Shuva-dristi ... Auspicious sight.

Shuva-karma ... Meritorious work.

Siddha ... ... Any thing boiled.

Siddha chál ... Rice husked by boiling.

Sidheswári ... Another name of the goddess *Kâli.*

Sindur ... ... Vermillion.

Sindurchupri ... Toilet box made of bamboo-barks lined with shells; silver ones are made for the wealthy.

Sinti ... ... A jewel for forehead.

Sitá ... ... Ráma Chandra's wife, heroine of the *Rámayana.*

Sitáhaur ... ... A jewel for forehead.

Sital Shasthi ... Another name of the goddess *Shasthi*, whose festivity is observed by eating stale food.

Sitávoge ... ... A kind of sweetmeat.

Sitori ... ... Presents given in winter.

Sloka ... ... Verses.

Smriti ... ... Sacred book.

Sonárchánd ... Literally golden moon; a term of endearment.

Sorosh ... ... Sixteen different kinds of gifts allotted to Bráhmans during *shráddha* ceremony. They are as follow:—

1. Land, or its value.
2. Seat (wooden) or a piece of carpet.
3. A waterpot.
4. A plate with rice.
5. A plate with a piece of cloth.
6. A plate with a garland of flowers.
7. A plate with a piece of sandalwood.
8. A milch cow, or its value.
9. An umbrella.
10. A pair of shoes.
11. A tray for betel-nut.
12. A lamp-stand.
13. A piece of silver.
14. A piece of gold.
15. A bed.
16. A plate with a fruit, generally a cocoa-nut.

Srí ... ... Emblem of prosperity and beauty; it is made of rice-paste, of conical shape; and with its colored ornaments, which are also made of the same material, it bears a distant resemblance to a Xmas cake.

Srimat Vágbat ... Sacred book of the Hindoos, especially for the *Vaishnab* class.

Sruti ... ... Sacred books; traditions.

Subachani ... ... A goddess.

Sudra ... ... Servile caste.

Suji ... ... Grainy flour.

Sukásan ... ... Literally comfortable seat; bridal conveyance.

Surjya ... ... Sun.

Tábij ... ... A gold armlet.

Tágá ... ... A jewel worn above the elbow in the shape of a bangle.

Támáshá ... ... Sport, jokes, fun, amusements.
Tantra Shástra ... Sacred books of the *Sákta* sect.
Táp ... ... Heat.
Táráhár ... ... A gold chain for neck.
Tarkári ... ... Vegetable dish.
Tastiram ... ... Religious mendicant.
Tatwá ... .. Literally enquiring after one's health. In case of relatives presents are given on such occasions.
Tár ... ... A gold jewel for arm, and a costly one.
Terchá Sári .. Fancy *Sári*, with slanting rows of flowers or stripes.
Thákurdálán ... Place of worship.
Thákurghar ... Place of worship.
Thákurpo ... ... Sisters-in-law (elder brother's wife) use this term in verbally addressing their husband's younger brothers.
Thálá ... ... A large plate (dish).
Thátta ... ... Pleasantries.
Theyti ... ... Widow's garment, a piece of cloth without any border or color.
Thuk-thuk ... Supernatural influence.
Tila Kánchan Shraddha ... Inexpensive funeral ceremony.
Tirthas ... Places of pilgrimage.
Toddy-khánná ... Where fermented palm-juice is sold.
Tom-tom ... ... Drum.
Trisul ... ... A 3-pronged weapon.
Tulsi ... ... A holy plant; *Ocimum sanctum.*

Ulu, Ulu, Ulu ... Sounds indicative of excessive joy uttered by women only on certain ceremonial occasions.

Unghia ... ... Corset.
Uráni ... ... A loose vesture for covering the body; sometimes worn over chapkan, frizzed.
Uttari ... ... A sheet of cloth worn by the chief mourner for one month, at one end of which an iron key is fastened to keep off evil spirit.

Vaishnavas ... A religions sect, followers of *Vishnu*, commonly known as *Bairágis*.

Vásán ... ... Same as *Niranjan*, or immersion.

Váth ... ... Boiled rice.

Veylá ... ... *Semicarpus anacardium*. A kind of nut, the black acrid juice of which serves the purpose of marking-ink to Indian Dhobies (washermen).

Vikramáditya ... A king, who was a great patron of learning; there is an era current in Bengal reckoning from his time.

Vilwu ... ... See *Billa patra*.

Vipra ... ... Bráhmans are called *Vipra*.

Vishnu ... ... The preserver, second person of the Hindoo Trinity.

Vojan ... ... Literally means eating. It is an entertainment to one's own caste-people. No others can partake of it without violating the rules of caste.

Yama ... ... God of death.

Yogas or *jogas* ... Auspicious time.

Yudhisthira ... One of the five *Pándavas*, heroes of the great epic poem *Mahábhárat*.

Yugas ... ... Ages.

Zabardast ... ... High-handed.

Zenáná ... ... Harem.

PRINTED BY THACKER, SPINK & CO., CALCUTTA.

FROM

E. B. COWELL, ESQ., LL.D.,

Professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have read your volume with very great interest; it seems to me an exceedingly good book. I have long desired that such a book should be compiled; it seems to me a mirror of native manners and customs. It must be full of the deepest interest to any one who cares about India and the Hindoo people.

It especially interested me, as I had been lately reading through the old poem of Chandi; and several allusions which I could not understand were explained by your book.

I hope your book will be appreciated as it deserves, and that you will add some more of these photographic sketches of Bengali life if it should reach a second edition.

I remain,

Yours sincerely,

E. B. COWELL.

FROM

THE HON. W. W. HUNTER, LL.D., C.I.E., &c.,

CALCUTTA.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am much obliged to you for the copy of your work, which you so kindly sent me. I had already perused the volume before leaving England, and I cordially endorse the commendations of the English press upon it. In showing us "The Hindoos as they are" you have placed within the reach of Englishmen, both in India and at Home, a vast store of facts which was practically inaccessible to any man of their race, but which it is of the highest importance that they

should be acquainted with. The literary workmanship of the book is equal to the value of its materials, and I am sincerely glad to hear that a new edition has already been called for.

I am,

Very faithfully yours,

W. W. HUNTER.

Witham, Essex.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have read your book with very great interest, and sincerely hope that the sale will reward you for the time and labour you have spent in endeavouring to make your countrymen better known to the people of England.

Yours very faithfully,

J. TALBOYS WHEELER.

Calcutta.

MY DEAR SIR,

I am reading your book carefully, and value it exceedingly.

Yours most respectfully,

JOSEPH COOK,

Boston Lecturer.

Allahabad.

DEAR SIR,

The book is interesting in many respects, and as to its composition, it is wonderfully well written.

SIR ROBERT STUART, KT.,

Chief Justice, N. W. P.,

through his Chief Clerk.

Conoor, Neilgherry Hills.

DEAR SIR,

I am very much pleased with your book. It is all the more interesting, as many of the customs pourtrayed are strikingly different from those of the Hindoos of Southern India. It is an admirable book.

Yours faithfully,

L. C. INNES, C.S.,

Late Offg. Chief Justice, Madras.

I have derived much pleasure from your book. It is a work the facts of which are as accurate in their representation of Hindoo life as its scope is remarkable for the extent of its range. I may call it an exhaustive treatise on the subject.

K. M. BANERJEA, LL.D.

"We have seldom read any book with greater interest; and we have read it, not as reviewers generally read, glancing a little here and a little there, but we have read every word of it from the beginning to the end. * * * We offer our thanks to Babu Shib Chunder Bose for the deeply interesting volume which he has presented to the world. For ourselves, we confess that we have learned from him some details of Hindoo customs with which we were not previously acquainted."—*Rev. Lal Behari Day in the Bengal Magazine.*

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

The Times.

"This account of Hindoo life in Bengal by an educated and intelligent Bengali throws important lights on an interesting subject. Shib Chunder Bose has little need to apologize in his preface for ideas imperfectly expressed in foreign idioms. He writes very creditable English. . . . . . . His pictures of the manners and customs of his countrymen are unreservedly faithful, and censequently uncomplimentary. He demonstrates, indirectly, but very conclusively, that the only prospect of their elevating themselves socially is in breaking with the prejudices of caste and immemorial custom, in asserting independence of thought, and the liberty of individual action. The change must inevitably be slow, at the best; although we already see the beginnings of it in the great cities. . . . . . . But the work we are reviewing clearly proves that there are native gentlemen of no ordinary capacity, who have penetrated below the surface of European life and thought, and who may become the apostles of progress among their countrymen as the field is cleared for their labours. The author is alive to the monstrosities of the system he condemns, and has formed definite ideas as to how they may be corrected. His present volume is confined to pictures of Hindoo society in Bengal, and especially in Calcutta. He proposes to follow it up by others, which shall treat of the remaining Provinces of India."

Saturday Review.

"The writer of this work would, doubtless, if he had been born and lived in England, be termed by friends and foes an advanced Liberal. He is a Hindoo gentleman, a native of Lower Bengal, and a member of one of the three great houses or clans which, by popular consent and unimpeachable tradition, are known as the Kulin Kayasthas of Bengal. . . . But it is clear that he has so mastered English thought and literature, that he may fairly be termed, in the words of Dean Stanley in his *Jewish Church*, a link between "the immovable repose of the Oriental and the endless activity and freedom of the Occidental World." . . . . . The veil is removed from the zenana, and we have an enumeration of the ceremonies practised at the birth of a Hindoo, at his assumption, if a Bráhman, of the sacred thread, at his marriage, at his death, and at the *Shráddha*, or sacrificial suppers to deceased relations. The details of each of these events, as well as the cere-

Opinions of the Press.—Contd.

monies of cherished national festivals, such as the Durgá and the Káli Puja, are given with a fulness and a minuteness to which no Englishman can pretend. . . . This volume comes to us with a deeper signification than appears on the surface. The distance which separates the grey-haired reformer of 1881 from the lad, who, half in curiosity and half in terror, accompanied a savage mob to see his relative burn on her husband's funeral pile, is not to be measured by a mere half-century. Bentinck would have been glad to recognize in this Bengali gentleman a native who justified his beneficent reforms, and Englishmen who remember the obstacles encountered forty-five years ago by Macaulay, Duff, and Trevelyan, will admit that there is some hope for the Hindoos of Bengal when their follies and extravagances are frankly and fairly criticized and held up to reprobation by one of themselves."

The Graphic.

"*The Hindoos as they are* is as interesting a book as we have read for a long time. Mr. Shib Chunder Bose writes excellent English, and he is a man of large and varied experience, eminently qualified to lift the veil from the inner life of his countrymen. . . . . It is what it professes to be a simple, faithful delineation of the present state of Hindoo society in Bengal, and especially in Calcutta, the Athens of Hindoostan."

St. James Budget.

"The work before us is a novelty. A Hindoo gentleman of Calcutta undertakes to tell English readers all about the domestic life of his fellow-citizens. . . . . Mr. Bose furnishes graphic descriptions of the daily life in Hindoo households, and inexpressibly dreary it seems in European eyes. . . . . In conclusion, we commend Mr. Bose's book as a valuable contribution to a better knowledge of the Hindoos of the present day, and as calculated to prove of political value to the people both of England and India."

The Scotsman.

"A book of very exceptional value is *The Hindoos as they are*," by Shib Chunder Bose. It is a detailed description of the domestic economy of the Hindoo household, the mode of life of each of its members, the manner in which children are reared and educated, the customs which regulate the positions and acts of men and women, the working of the institution of caste, the rites of all

the more important among the many religious and family festivals observed by the Hindoos, and so forth. The work derives its distinctive importance from the fact that the writer is a native Bengali, a man of exceptional intelligence and force of character, who has added Western culture to an ample stock of Hindoo learning and experience, and who is able to speak on the subjects he here treats with the authority of personal knowledge and observation. He has acquired a thorough mastery of our language, as this book abundantly proves, for there is scarcely a single peculiarity of style to indicate that it has been written by a foreigner. He has performed his undertaking in an unpretentious, straightforward fashion, and he supplies a mass of information about the domestic life and customs of the Hindoos such as is not presented in any other book of which we have knowledge, in so clear and succinct a form."

Free Church Record.

" A remarkable book . . . . admirably supplying a long-felt want."

The Leeds Mercury.

" *The Hindoos as they are* is a most interesting and valuable book on a subject of which English people know very little. . . . . . . Though presenting his views in another language than his own, Shib Chunder Bose writes English with singular clearness and freedom, and he has made a most admirable classification of his details. . . . . Of the unfortunate condition of Hindoo women we know something through the agency of the Zenana Missions, but Shib Chunder Bose throws a stronger light on the subject than any which has yet been shed through the agency of annual reports."

Englishman.

" If any of our readers are curious about the domestic life of the Hindoos, we can confidently commend to their notice a volume entitled 'The Hindoos as they are,' by Baboo Shib Chunder Bose, which has just been published by Messrs. Newman and Co. The first Chapter, on the Hindoo household, serves as an introduction to the rest of the book, which describes in detail the more prominent ceremonial and social incidents of Hindoo life. Taken by itself, it is an important contribution to the world's knowledge of an obscure but interesting subject, and is alone worth the price of the book.

Opinions of the Press.—Contd.

"To fulness of knowledge the author adds great candour, and it would be difficult to find either a more accurate presentment, or a more impartial criticism, of the facts, than is furnished in his pages. His style, too, is at once graphic and unaffected."

Indian Daily News.

"This is the work of a man who knows what he is writing about. In boyhood, familiar with the inner life of Native Bengal society, and more or less in contact with it for fifty years, he reproduces in this book a series of recollections and vivid pictures of native society, which have all the merit of simple truthfulness. * * * The work is highly interesting and instructive, and is likely to be widely read."

Statesman.

"The book ought to be in the hands of every Christian, and of every Christian Missionary who wishes to know what a Hindoo has to say on the present state of Hindoo society. We anticipate for it a wide circulation both in England and in India."

Pioneer.

"May be honestly recommended to all who desire to study the life of the denizens of this land. * * * Baboo Shib Chunder Bose, the author of the work before us, is introduced to the reader by the Rev. W. Hastie, B.D., Principal of the General Assembly's Institution, who assures us that the Baboo 'is an enlightened Bengali of matured conviction and character, who has received the stirring impulse of Western culture and thought.' None the less is he a patriotic Hindoo, thoroughly versed in the ways and works of Hindoo society, especially as it exists in the Lower Provinces."

Civil and Military Gazette.

"It is the manners, customs, and inner life of Hindoo society in Bengal which Shib Chunder Bose describes. On this subject he has much to say that is instructive, and, unfortunately, more that is sad.

"The book is a good and instructive one, and lets much light into the inner life of a Hindoo, from the moment of his advent into the world until, overtaken by his last sickness, he is carried down by his friends to the banks of the sacred Ganges or Hooghly."

Harvest Field, Madras.

"This work deserves, as we trust it will receive, a most cor-

dial welcome from all who desire to know the people of this country as they really are. * * * He has produced an eminently readable and valuable book, and given to us a wealth of knowledge regarding a world which we cannot see for ourselves. To those who love to study the ways of men in India, and who little dream of the pathos and poetry which lie below the surface, this book should be truly welcome, while to missionaries who seek not to destroy the poetry, but to add to the purity of social life, it will be simply invaluable, and should awaken in them a more tender sympathy, and give renewed stimulus to their efforts."

Indian Evangelical Review.

"The chief excellences of the book are its accurate descriptions of the Hindoos as they are, its unhesitating denunciation of the evil (and the evil is great and fearful, and heart-rending), and the pleasing, interesting manner, and, as a rule, the very correct style, in which the whole thing is told."

Express.

"To detail even a tithe of the ceremonial observances of a Hindoo marriage—as related by Baboo Shib Chunder Bose—would require an edition of the *Express* for the purpose. The narrative, however, is surprisingly interesting . . . especially to Europeans, who know so little, as a rule, about the inner lives of our Aryan brethren of the upper classes of native society."

Indian Mirror.

"Written by a Hindoo, who must be better acquainted with the inner life of his countrymen than strangers can ever be expected to be; the work is, as might be naturally supposed, a repository of much minuter information about Hindoo life than what has been hitherto collected and brought to light by other writers, who, on account of their foreign blood and alien religion, could not have had free access to Hindoo society. The descriptions contained in the volume before us are, no doubt, the result of great labor and careful observation. * * * The work abounds in a mine of information that will certainly be found new by Europeans. * * * As for its general get-up, and the rich and entertaining variety of matter it embodies, the book before us is one of the best and most interesting that has ever been published on this difficult, if not altogether unexplored, subject * * * * If the writer can succeed

Opinions of the Press.—Contd.

in bringing about such a happy consummation, he will earn, and deservedly too, the lasting gratitude of his countrymen for his disinterested labors in the accomplishment of his self-imposed task."

Journal of the National Indian Association.

"The title, at all events, of this book is attractive. It produces a sensation akin to that caused by the opening of a sealed book, the discovery of a long-concealed treasure, the revelation of the mysteries of a secret society. Hindoo life has always been represented, by Hindoos themselves, as a sort of arcana, into the secrets of which it were vain for the Western mind to attempt to penetrate.

"The chapter describing the principal Hindoo festivals will be found full of interest. The descriptions are not those of a superficial observer, but are graphic pictures drawn from life, showing not only the outward features—often of a very revolting nature—which characterize these festivals, but the household ceremonies, and particularly those which are observed by the female inmates.

"The book is vigorously and graphically written, and should be in the hands of every one who sees in the moral, social, and intellectual amelioration of our Eastern dependency a pressing national duty."

Lucknow Witness.

"There is a general agreement on the part of those fully qualified to give opinion, that it is accurate and trustworthy in its facts, that it details the social and religious observances of the Hindoos *as they are* to-day. This is much. The book seems to fill a gap. We know of nothing exactly like it. We can very heartily commend it. We think it will be widely sought for as a convenient popular compendium of important information. Some of this indeed is commonly known, or is accessible in other shapes, but there is much in the book that will be new to almost all who have not moved in the innermost circles of Hindoo life."

